



THE  
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

---

MARCH 1894.

---

*MATTHEW AUSTIN*<sup>1</sup>

BY W. E. NORRIS.

CHAPTER IX.

UNFORESEEN PERIL.

IT falls to the lot of doctors and parsons to see many strange things, and they are, or ought to be, much less easily astonished than the rest of us. Anglican clerics, it is true, learn remarkably little, as a rule, considering what their opportunities are, because they lack that preliminary training which is of so much value to their brethren of the Romish communion; but the average English doctor knows a good deal and may be relied upon to exercise the average English common sense in dealing with the facts before him. Matthew Austin, therefore, ascribed no more importance than it deserved to an episode which might have had uncomfortable results for Miss Frere, if not for himself, nor did he think it incumbent upon him to go out of his way in order to call at Hayes Park and ascertain whether she had effected her midnight entry without detection. Hearing nothing in the course of the next few days, he assumed—and was quite correct in assuming—that she and the nurse had managed matters successfully between them.

For the rest, he was a little disinclined to seek further occasions of private parley with Anne, fearing lest she might insist upon hearing more about her brother than it was desirable that she should hear. Colonel Egerton's confidential report respecting the latter had, in truth, been somewhat disquieting, although from a strictly professional point of view it had been satisfactory

<sup>1</sup> Copyright, 1894, by J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY, in the United States.

enough. The letter which had been handed over to Matthew by the official personage at the War Office was brief and frank.

'Personally, I like the man,' the Colonel wrote. 'I think he would make a first-rate officer, and I have had one or two talks with him and given him some good advice. But whether he will keep straight or not I can't say. I don't believe he drinks; only it is always one of two things, you know, and in his case I suspect that it's the other thing. He is too good-looking and too much given to swagger. Of course all the women here—the so-called ladies, I mean—have found out that he is a gentleman, and it would not surprise me to hear at any moment that he had got himself into a scrape. I only say this in order that you may breathe a word of warning to his friends. I can't very well speak to him upon the subject, except in general terms.'

That was tantamount to saying that an advance from the general to the particular might be made without indiscretion by Sergeant Frere's friends, and Matthew, after some hesitation, had decided to address a few lines to his unknown *protégé*, quoting Colonel Egerton's remarks and venturing to add a few comments of his own thereupon. No answer had reached him, nor in fact had he expected any; but he had his own misgivings, grounded upon some previous acquaintance with good-looking, swaggering and ostentatiously reckless young men.

Meanwhile, he was forced to recognise regretfully that his attempt to bring about an intimacy between Anne Frere and Lilian Murray had been a failure. Lilian, when casually interrogated upon the subject, confessed candidly that she did not like Miss Frere.

'I went to tea with her yesterday,' the girl said, 'and I should have yawned my head off if I hadn't been particularly cautioned by mamma to mind my manners. Besides, as she is such a friend of yours, I thought I would try my very best to be amiable. But she frightened and froze me. I suppose she never makes you feel inclined to swear at her, does she?'

'I can't say that she has produced that effect upon me as yet,' answered Matthew, laughing.

'Well, she produces that effect upon *me*. Oh, not because of anything that she says or does; only because one can't help wondering what the consequences would be. I see you don't understand and I can't explain. You like people because they are good.'

‘One might have a worse reason for liking them.’

‘Yes; but it’s a reason for disliking them when one isn’t over and above good one’s self, and when they *are* over and above good. You are as good as gold; but then you have a different way of showing your goodness.’

All this was so manifestly unfair that Matthew could only hold his peace and reflect that fairness towards one another is not the common attribute of women. He might have gone a little further and remembered that jealousy is their universal attribute, had he not been determined to look upon Lilian Murray as a mere child. To suppose that her jealousy could have been aroused by his frequently expressed admiration for Anne Frere would, according to his view, have been a little too ridiculous.

He now ceased, however, to express that admiration with so much frequency; because praise of the absent was never yet known to overcome prejudice. It was a pity that two ladies so charming in their respective fashions could not hit it off together; but since they could not, there was no more to be said. Lilian, too—so he was informed when he paid his hurried daily visits to her mother—was in less urgent need of companionship than she had been. Wilverton was filling rapidly; the gouty and rheumatic arrivals included, as might have been anticipated, a few acquaintances of Lady Sara’s, and these had brought with them relatives who were not yet of an age to understand the meaning of stiff joints. Lilian was no longer forced to rely solely upon her own resources for killing time, while Lady Sara herself was enlivened by remote contact with the outer world.

The unfortunate thing was that this natural craving for contact with the outer world was apt to bring her into contact with the outer air more often than her medical adviser could think prudent. He did not like to forbid drives with friends who had a comfortable carriage at her service and whose society was good for her spirits; but he feared that these well-meaning people were not quite as careful as they should have been to avoid exposing her to raw cold, and, dropping in at Prospect Place late one evening, he found, sure enough, that she had at last caught the chill which he had dreaded. He packed her off to bed at once, prescribed remedies and hoped for the best; but it was no surprise to him to be called back, a few hours later, and to discover that his patient was undoubtedly in for an attack of bronchitis.

‘We have taken it in time and we ought to be able to stave

off serious mischief,' he told the alarmed Lilian. 'We won't meet trouble half-way, anyhow. I have given full instructions to the nurse, but if it would be a comfort to you to see me, you must not scruple to send for me at any hour of the day or night.'

She would not, in any case, have been likely to be troubled with scruples on that score, for she had implicit faith in Matthew's powers and probably did not think that other patients of his might be as much in want of him as her mother was; but poor Lady Sara soon became so ill that there was every excuse for the imploring message which reached him before he was up on the following morning. He hastened to Prospect Place as soon as he had put on his clothes, and could not disguise either from himself or from those about her that the sick woman was in a bad way. Complications which he had dreaded, but had preferred not to anticipate, had set in with unexpected suddenness, and whether he would be able to pull her through or not was a very doubtful question indeed.

In emergencies of that crucial kind Matthew always instinctively assumed his professional manner; so that Lilian was rather overawed by the concise, peremptory orders issued to her, and hardly ventured to inquire what was the matter. She would not have understood if she had been told, and indeed he told her no more than that they had now pleurisy as well as bronchitis to contend against; but later in the day he thought it his duty to ask whether she would like to have a second opinion and to offer, in that case, to telegraph to London for her.

'I don't know,' she answered, catching her breath; 'how can I tell? Won't you advise me about what I ought to do?'

Matthew considered for a minute or two. 'Well,' he replied at length, 'I am willing to take the entire responsibility upon myself. I say this, knowing that you may blame me hereafter, and I would not say it unless I were absolutely certain that the whole College of Physicians could give me no real help in the present instance.'

'Do you mean that there is no hope, then?' asked the girl, with quivering lips.

'No; I only mean that I have not the slightest doubt as to the method of treatment. More than that I must not say: it is for you to choose.' She chose instantly and unhesitatingly—not, of course, understanding that Matthew had risked a severe blow to his reputation in order to spare her pocket.



'If you can't save mamma's life, nobody can,' she cried. 'And,' she added, after a moment, 'whatever happens, you may be sure that I shall never be such a wretch as to blame you.'

Well, he was glad that she had decided to trust him. He could but do his best, and he knew that no eminent London colleague could do more than he was doing; but during the week that ensued he had a very anxious time of it. Sometimes he felt almost sanguine, but more often he despaired. The odds against the patient's recovery were too formidable to be overcome by skill; her only chance lay in a stock of vitality with which he had no reasonable ground for crediting her.

Nevertheless, skill counts for something, and a day came at length when he was able to say that he had gained the victory which he had set himself to gain. Lady Sara, exhausted and barely conscious, might or might not sink in the course of the next twenty-four hours; but her disease, or rather diseases, had been beaten. This was what he told Lilian, whose courage and self-command had won his enthusiastic admiration during the trying time through which she had passed, and to whom he now knew that he might venture to speak in plain language. She, on her side, had learnt to regard him with that species of unquestioning adoration which women usually reserve for priests. Perhaps she did not realise—not knowing how busy he was—the extent to which he had sacrificed hours which should have been devoted to rest and food in order that he might be as constantly as possible in attendance upon her mother; but she did know that it was he who had enabled her to endure the long ordeal of watching and nursing and that his unflagging cheerfulness alone had preserved her from giving way to despair. Already she had begun to wonder what would become of her when the blow which seemed to be almost inevitable should have fallen and when there would be no further need for a doctor's services in that house.

'If only it were to-morrow morning!' she sighed wistfully.

'Do you think you will be able to come quite early?'

'Oh, I'm only going away for about an hour,' he answered. 'There are two people whom I *must* see; but I have arranged with Dr. Jennings about the others and I mean to stay the night here. That will enable you to go to bed, which it is absolutely necessary that you should do. You may depend upon me to have you called, in case of any change.'

She had become so docile that it no more occurred to her to

dispute his commands than to protest against his sitting up all night. She only ejaculated, 'Oh, what a mercy! I feel as if nothing very bad could happen while you are here. But must I undress? I am so dead tired that I could sleep quite soundly on the sofa in the sitting-room.'

Matthew, after a moment's consideration, made the concession required of him. 'It isn't the same thing,' he said, 'and I can't have you falling ill upon my hands through sheer over-fatigue. Still, for this one night, you may keep your clothes on. Afterwards you will have to remember that it is indispensable for you to husband your forces.'

'But will there be an afterwards?'

'Well, well! At all events, you must sleep, and I see by your eyes that sleep will come, whether you wish for it or not. Now it is time for me to be off. I won't be absent for more than an hour and a half, at the outside.'

He was not absent quite so long as that. The 'arrangement' which he had concluded with Dr. Jennings was simply the handing over of certain patients to that bland practitioner, who had pointed out, with equal courtesy and firmness, that it would be not only improper but impossible for him to enter into anything which might have the appearance of a partnership with Mr. Austin. Matthew, therefore, was free for twelve hours to come, and congratulated himself upon his freedom. Only the nurse was in Lady Sara's room when he returned. Lilian, as he had anticipated, had succumbed to irresistible physical weariness and was sleeping heavily upon the sofa in the sitting-room, the nurse said.

He gave orders that she was on no account to be disturbed, dismissed the nurse to take an hour or two of the rest which she also urgently required and seated himself by the bedside. There for a long time he remained, watching the semi-conscious sufferer, whose ceaseless movements gave him little encouragement, and deftly administering nourishment to her every now and again. She was going to die; he was almost sure of that now; and mingled with his professional sense of disappointment and failure was an intense pity for the helpless girl whom she was about to leave behind her. It was so easy to foresee what would happen!—the period of dependence upon annoyed relations, the hastily-arranged *mariage de convenance*, the results which, in most cases, follow such unions as a matter of course. And all this because the age of miracles is said to be past, because Providence no longer inter-

feres with the process of Nature, because dying women cannot be kept alive in order that mundane affairs may run more smoothly!

'Are we punished for our want of faith, or are we only meant to understand that our responsibilities are greater than we have chosen to assume?' Matthew wondered.

But soon after midnight something took place which lifted the burden of immediate responsibility off his shoulders and which may have been an answer to his half-formulated prayers. He had not expected it; for a few seconds he scarcely dared to believe in it; but presently he satisfied himself that he had made no mistake and that his patient was at last quietly slumbering. The nurse had by this time returned, and he whispered to her that he was going to impart the good news to Miss Murray, whom he could hear stirring in the adjoining room.

'I believe we shall pull this case through, after all,' he murmured hopefully.

To which the woman replied, 'It's thanks to you, sir, if we do.'

Well, that might or might not be so; but thanks which, if a little premature, were wholly irrepressible, at all events awaited him. Lilian, hardly yet awake, was standing, with dazed, wide-open eyes beside the sofa when he entered, and at his first words her self-control, which she had maintained with so much difficulty during many anxious days and nights, forsook her altogether. She burst suddenly into hysterical weeping, she seized Matthew's hand and kissed it, passionate words and sentences, intended to express the gratitude which was perhaps his due, and attributable, as every reasonable man must have perceived, merely to her overstrung condition, broke from her lips. Matthew, who was nothing if not reasonable, soothed her to the best of his ability and tried not to listen more than he could help to what she was saying. One doesn't, of course, listen more than one can help to the delirious ravings of those who, for the time being, have ceased to be sane fellow-creatures. But where does sanity end and insanity begin? If that question could be answered, a good deal of trouble might be averted.

Anyhow, it was by no means certain yet that the great trouble which threatened Lilian Murray could be averted, and this was what Matthew strove to explain to her as soon as she had in some degree recovered her composure. Her mother, he assured her, was still very dangerously ill. There had been a turn for the

better, and he had hopes now which he had not entertained a few hours earlier: more than that he could not feel justified in saying. But Lilian would have none of these stereotyped phrases.

‘As if I could not see by your face that you have saved her!’ she exclaimed, half laughing through her tears. ‘Oh, and you have saved me too!—if you only knew! It is horrible to be so selfish and to think of anything or anybody except her; but I couldn’t help it. All this time I have felt certain that I should lose her, and there isn’t another creature in the world who cares a pin for me. It is what she has always dreaded—dying before I married—we have often talked about it. You see, ours has been a rather unfortunate family, and she was afraid—when one is obliged to find a home somewhere, one can’t pick and choose—’

These incoherent avowals were intelligible enough to Matthew, who was unable to respond to them in his customary quasi-paternal tone. He was unable, in fact, to respond to them otherwise than a little gruffly; for it had dawned upon him all of a sudden that the regard which he felt for Lilian Murray was not paternal at all and that it behoved him to take very great care what he said. That, notwithstanding the warm language which she had employed just now, she could entertain any sentiment towards a country doctor save one of somewhat exaggerated gratitude was, of course, as much out of the question as it would have been for him to abuse the position of trust in which he was placed; yet, in the event of a not improbable contingency, might she not do worse than become the wife even of a country doctor, who loved her?

But this latter query was one which merely flitted across Matthew’s brain while he was regaining his hold over himself and making the girl swallow a few drops of *sal volatile*. If his own nervous system had been temporarily shaken almost as much as hers, he had had far more practice in reducing it to submission, and he soon recovered his natural voice and manner. On quitting her, however, to return to Lady Sara’s room, he inwardly determined not to see her again before the morning. The nurse should be sent to her, he promised, when her mother woke.

## CHAPTER X.

## AN UPSET.

OF all the triumphs that fall to the share of the fortunate among mankind how many are due to desert and how many to simple good fortune? Modest Field-M Marshals, Prime Ministers, patentees of epoch-making inventions, renowned jockeys and other shining lights—it must be said for these heroes that most of them are quite modest—are wont to ascribe their several exalted positions to the latter rather than to the former cause. Still nothing succeeds like success, and, when all deductions have been made, the rough-and-ready rule of judging by results remains the only safe one open to us. Possibly Lady Sara Murray recovered from her dangerous illness, not because she had an excellent and most attentive doctor, but because her constitution was a tougher one than it appeared to be; but this did not prevent Mr. Austin from reaping immense credit for having snatched a patient out of the very jaws of death, nor, to tell the truth, did it prevent him from triumphing in a quiet way when nobody was looking on.

He stood at his dining-room window, one morning after breakfast, gazing out at the brown, empty flower-beds and the evergreen shrubs, illumined by pale rays of winter sunshine, and said to himself that this sort of thing was worth living for. A week had elapsed since that critical night when he had all but made up his mind that Lilian Murray was to be left an orphan, and he was now able to affirm that immediate risk of that catastrophe was at an end. Whether through his skill alone or only through his skill, supplemented by favourable circumstances, Lady Sara was about to enter upon the convalescent stage, and, after all, the labourer is worthy of his hire. It was a legitimate triumph, which he was fully entitled to enjoy.

But what—beyond the enhanced reputation to which he attached no more value than it merited—was his hire? And why was he in such exuberant spirits as to be unable to help ejaculating aloud that life was worth living? He was not greatly given to introspection, or he might have felt it his duty to take himself to task somewhat severely upon these points. There is surely no great cause for exultation in having fallen desperately in love with a girl of little more than half your own age and considerably more than double your own social importance. A man who allows himself to behave in that way is no better than an ass, while, if he

were to contemplate taking advantage of a family physician's opportunities for the furtherance of projects upon which lovers are usually intent, he would be rather worse than an ass. But Matthew was troubled with no such unpleasant reflections. It was perfectly obvious to him that Lilian Murray was, for all practical purposes, as far removed from his reach as a royal princess; he no more dreamt of declaring his love than of asking himself whether, by any wild possibility, it could be returned; he was simply satisfied with seeing her every day, with knowing that, for the time being, he had made her happy and with noticing how her face lighted up the moment that his own came within her view. There exist, amongst the endless varieties of human beings, a few of his sort: men and women who are genuinely—constitutionally, it may be—unselfish and who, without any figure of speech, are fonder of their fellow-mortals than they are of themselves.

From one point of view it was doubtless fortunate both for Matthew and for Lilian that they were ignorant of the reports which were being industriously circulated about them by Mrs. Jennings and other unemployed old ladies; for, had they been aware of these, their intercourse must necessarily have become less unembarrassed than it was. But one of them, when he went his daily rounds, was in too great a hurry to listen to gossip, while the other heard nothing and saw nobody. A certain number of professedly anxious inquirers did, indeed, get as far as the door of the house in Prospect Place, but no farther. Lilian sent reports of her mother's condition down to them, but steadily declined to receive them, alleging that she did not feel fit to do so. She would not even see Mrs. Frere, who brought flowers and grapes, and who was goodnaturedly desirous of cheering the poor girl up. It was Matthew who encountered that kind-hearted lady just as she was upon the point of driving away one day, and who was beckoned to and questioned by her.

'Can't we be of any use?' Mrs. Frere wanted to know. 'One doesn't wish to be a nuisance; only one would like to do what one could, and it makes me wretched to think of poor little Miss Murray without a single friend to speak to in her trouble. Oh, I know she has you, and you have been quite indefatigable, they tell me; still you are a man, you see, and men, with the best will in the world, can't understand exactly how to deal with girls.'

If a delicate hint was intended to be conveyed by this remark,



it was lost upon Matthew, who thought he knew quite well how to deal with Miss Murray and who had no suspicion that the gossips were busy with his name and hers. What caused him a moment's self-reproach, when Mrs. Frere had left him, was that he had forgotten to inquire after Anne—had, indeed, for some little time past almost forgotten Anne's existence. To be sure, as he reflected, half commiserating, half laughing at himself, there had been excuses for him. Who doesn't forget his friends when he has been goose enough to fall in love?

The danger that lay before him no doubt was that he might forget, not only people, but certain things which it was very necessary for his peace of mind to remember. Associating, as he did, with Lilian and her mother upon terms of equality, he might insensibly drift into a false estimate of their respective stations, might even allow himself to cherish hopes which were palpably absurd. Lady Sara, sitting up in bed, and being now permitted to talk as much as she liked, administered an anticipatory corrective, one day, which was all the more effective because it was evidently dictated by no *arrière-pensée*.

'I can't deny that it is pleasant to feel one's health returning,' said she; 'still I am ever so much more indebted to you on Lilian's account than I am on my own. If you can patch me up enough to enable me to get through one London season, I shall be ready to sing *Nunc dimittis* and expire, blessing you. Of course she is young, and one would gladly have waited a year or two; but I must not think of that—there isn't time. With her face, and with the connections I have managed to keep up, a husband of the requisite rank and means ought to be discovered for her without much difficulty.'

'Is it so certain that rank and wealth are essential to happiness?' Matthew inquired.

'Oh, yes, I think so. At any rate, wealth is. You see, my dear Mr. Austin, I am not in a state to maintain pretty fictions—even if anybody did maintain them nowadays. Grim realities stare me in the face, and I have seen a good deal of the world in my time. I wish it were what poets and romance-writers try to make it out; but unfortunately it isn't. Lilian is like a thousand other girls and will be like a thousand other women; she may miss the very best that is attainable, but I hope to provide her at least with the second best. And I suppose we all know what that is.'



Matthew supposed that we did. With a rather heavy heart he went down to the door, where his dog-cart was waiting to take him several miles out into the country. He had an outlying patient to visit, and as he drove at his usual rapid pace through the raw, moist air and along the muddy roads, he meditated upon what the second best was likely to mean in Lilian's case. Some horrible old Marquis of Carrabas, perhaps, or some recently ennobled plutocrat, either of whom would weary of her charms and neglect her sooner or later. Well, then there would remain the consolations of jewels, dresses and an abundance of creature comforts—possibly also the more legitimate consolation of maternity. It is useless to pretend that these things do not console; one must needs look truth in the face. But there are moments when Truth seems to wear so ugly a face that one would fain leave her at the bottom of her well and shut down the lid.

Matthew was precluded by the honesty of his nature from having recourse to that measure; so his spirits gradually sank lower and lower, as the shades of evening fell, although he knew no more now than he had known from the first. He had seen his patient and was returning towards Wilverton when a young man on a bicycle shot noiselessly past him, splashing some mud into his face and starting the mare into a gallop. Matthew had one of his wheels half-way up a bank before he knew where he was; but his customary good luck preserved him from an upset, and presently he succeeded in checking the mare, while James, the groom, delivered himself of some forcible remarks upon cyclists in general and upon the young man who had so nearly caused an accident in particular.

'I wish he'd break his dratted neck, that I do!' ejaculated the irate James; 'such fellers ain't fit to live!'

'Upon my word, James, I believe you have got your wish!' exclaimed Matthew, as the sound of a crashing fall some distance ahead caught his ear. 'He is down, anyhow, and had a nasty cropper, I suspect. This comes of tearing downhill a hundred miles an hour.'

It was the work of little more than a minute to overtake the reckless cyclist, who was discovered prostrate beside the heap of stones which had brought about his disaster, his broken and twisted machine lying near him. He was not unconscious, but he had cut himself a good deal about the face and seemed to be somewhat dazed, as well as very angry. After Matthew had

rendered him some preliminary services, he relieved his feelings by objurgating bicycles with a vehemence which would have done credit to James himself. Then he remarked :

‘I don’t know how many bones I’ve broken, but I can’t move either of my arms without swearing. If you happen to know of any local Pill-box residing in the neighbourhood, it would be an act of charity to drive on and tell him that he’ll find me by the wayside. You might just mention that my name is Jerome and that I’m staying with my uncle Mr. Litton at the Grange. I dare say he’ll know my uncle.’

‘I myself happen to be a local Pill-box,’ answered Matthew good-humouredly, ‘and if you will let me hoist you into my cart, I will drive you to the Grange without jolting you more than I can help. You have broken your right arm—I am not sure about the left—and I will set it for you as soon as I get you home. That is, unless your uncle, who is not one of my patients, prefers to send for somebody else.’

The stranger accepted this offer with many thanks, and apologised for having inadvertently spoken of the Good Samaritan who had come to his aid as a Pill-box. Of course, he remarked, he wouldn’t have done it if he had known. It was no easy matter to lift him over the wheel and place him in a semi-recumbent attitude upon the front seat, for he was a very tall and rather heavy young man; but with the help of James the feat was accomplished, and Matthew, resuming the reins, started the mare at a gentle pace towards Wilverton Grange, a large modern mansion with the whereabouts of which he was well acquainted.

His neighbour, at whom he glanced from time to time, was a handsome, as well as a powerfully built fellow, with black hair, dark-blue eyes and regular features. He had no hair about his face, and could afford to follow the modern custom of shaving clean, since there was no fault to be found with the shape of his mouth. Just now his countenance was adorned with sundry cuts and bruises, and he was evidently in a good deal of pain; but this he bore uncomplainingly. What vexed him, it appeared, was that he should have been the victim of a bicycle accident.

‘I shouldn’t so much have minded coming to grief out hunting or in a steeplechase,’ he observed ruefully; ‘that would at least have been respectable. But to be smashed up by an idiotic machine like that!—well, it will be a lesson to me. After this, I do hope my uncle will see how inhuman it is to ask a fellow

down here for a fortnight and never offer to put up his horses. The very least he can do now is to pay the coach-builder in Wilverton from whom I hired that brute of a thing. I expect he'll have the additional pleasure of entertaining me for another month, eh? How long does it generally take to get over this sort of business?'

Matthew replied that he could not possibly give an opinion without knowing what the extent of the injuries was. He was inclined to suspect that the young man was rather badly hurt; but of course he did not say so, and he made for Wilverton Grange as quickly as circumstances would permit. Of the wealthy and eccentric bachelor to whom that establishment belonged he had heard something from Mrs. Jennings, but, not being inquisitive, had forgotten the greater part of what the well-informed lady had told him. The place had been built many years before by Mr. Litton, who had likewise purchased by degrees a vast extent of adjoining property, and had consequently become, in a certain sense, the great man of the neighbourhood. He was in the habit of contributing munificently to local charities and public works, he lived all by himself, he never called upon anybody, and he was reported to have an uncommonly nasty temper. That was all that Matthew could remember about him.

What most people would have remembered, as a more or less interesting detail, was that he had a nephew—the shattered bicyclist, in fact—to whom it was generally assumed that he would some day leave the whole of his possessions; but that, it is true, was none of Matthew's business. His business was to ascertain what was the matter, and he proceeded to do so with all possible celerity after halting beneath the imposing Grecian portico of the Grange and hastily informing the butler and the footman of the accident which had occurred. Mr. Jerome was silently and swiftly taken upstairs—the servants being evidently anxious above all things to avoid alarming or disturbing their master—and, at the end of a careful and prolonged examination, Matthew had the satisfaction of announcing that a pair of broken arms practically constituted the sum of the mischief done.

'Not that that isn't enough,' he remarked, looking down compassionately upon the victim; 'only it might have been much worse. As it is, I am afraid you will have to resign yourself to a little immediate pain and some weeks of helplessness. I have done as much as I can for the present; but I will despatch my

groom for the things that I want and stay with you until he comes back, if you like. Subject, of course, to your uncle's approval. Very likely he would rather send for his own doctor.'

'Oh, he be hanged!' returned the young man. 'My body is my own, if my soul isn't, and I suppose I am entitled to choose who shall put it into plaster of Paris for me. If you'll be good enough to undertake my case, I shall be only too grateful. I can see that you have light hands and that you know what you're about. All I beg of you is that you won't let the old man come in here, if you can help it. He is apt to be exasperating, and I don't feel quite fit to be exasperated just now.'

The speaker had by this time been put to bed, and was being attended to by his valet, who seemed to be a quiet and capable sort of man. Presently Matthew went away to give the requisite instructions to James, and was returning towards his patient's bedroom when he was intercepted at the top of the staircase by a little old gentleman, leaning upon a stick, who said, in a thin, sharp voice:

'Mr. Austin, I presume?'

Richard Litton was a man at whom nobody could look once without looking a second time, although his appearance could scarcely be described as prepossessing. Bent, undersized and wearing a short grey beard, while his upper lip was shaved, he did not impress the beholder as being either handsome, amiable or well-bred, and his pinched features, shaggy eyebrows and piercing grey eyes conveyed the idea that they might belong to a miser. Avarice, however, was by no means one of his somewhat numerous defects, nor was his heart as hard as his forbidding manner suggested. Moreover, there was a certain indescribable aspect of power about his countenance which commanded attention, if not respect. He said he had been told by the butler of what had happened, put a few quick, pertinent questions, and ended by remarking:

'Well, I have always employed Dr. Jennings, and I shall continue to employ him when I am ill: I wish that to be clearly understood, please. But you are a younger man, and I dare say Leonard is better off with you. I am told that he is anxious to be left under your care. After all, it is only right that you should mend his bones, for I suppose you began by upsetting him and breaking them. I have heard that you are notorious for careless driving.'

'That may be,' answered Matthew; 'but it was not I who upset your nephew. On the contrary, he very nearly upset me; after which he proceeded to upset himself.'

'Indeed? Well, Mr. Austin, I am obliged to you for the trouble that you have taken, and so ought he to be. But he is an ungrateful fellow, you will find.'

'Oh, there hasn't been any trouble,' answered Matthew, laughing a little. 'Except, indeed, in hoisting him into the dog-cart. That, I must admit, was a troublesome job, for he is no light weight.'

'I understood you to say that he had broken his arms,' observed Mr. Litton; 'I don't see why that should make it necessary to lift him. At least, I am not aware that he is in the habit of walking upon his hands.'

'No; but if you will try to get into a dog-cart with your arms tied behind your back, you will find that your legs are not of as much service to you as usual.'

Matthew was rather surprised at perceiving that this rejoinder, which had not been meant to give offence, was taken in very ill part. He had not noticed that his interlocutor was slightly deformed, having one leg shorter than the other, and it was not until some time afterwards that he learnt how morbidly sensitive Mr. Litton was upon the subject. The old man drew his shaggy brows together and said, in cold, polite accents which contrasted with the half-good-humoured brusquerie of his previous utterances:

'You will, no doubt, be detained for some little time longer, Mr. Austin, and I hope you will do me the honour to eat your dinner here. I must ask you to excuse me from entertaining you personally, as I seldom take my meals in the dining-room, but I can trust my butler to take care that your comfort is not neglected. I have received an intimation that my nephew does not desire to be troubled with me; so I will not intrude upon him to-night. I wish you good-evening, sir.'

He moved away very slowly—so slowly that his lameness was barely perceptible—until he reached a certain doorway, through which he disappeared.

'Temper soured by prosperity and solitude and the consciousness of expectant heirs,' thought Matthew. 'Health probably indifferent, too; for his chest is contracted and there is a look of suffering about that hard, firm mouth of his. Men of his sort are very much to be pitied; still, all things considered, I am rather glad that he is not my uncle.'

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE CANTANKEROUS UNCLE.

IF Matthew was not much prepossessed in favour of the uncle, he soon formed a high opinion of the nephew. There are people whose virtues demand patient excavation, while there are other and more fortunate folk whose fine qualities lie upon the surface for every eye to see and take pleasure in. Leonard Jerome's great popularity was probably due to the fact that he belonged to the latter class, and indeed his worst enemies—supposing that he had had any enemies at all—could hardly have refused him credit for courage and good-humour. Matthew had to give him considerable pain, and he neither winced nor protested under it; nor did he grumble more than was natural and pardonable at the prospect of a prolonged period of helplessness to which he was told that he must make up his mind. It is by no means everybody who is so cheerful or so reasonable as that, and Matthew, on concluding operations, felt impelled to say:

‘I wish all my patients had your pluck!’

‘When one doesn't like the inevitable, there is nothing to be done but to lump it,’ observed Mr. Jerome philosophically. ‘The really disgusting thing is to be punished in this way for an ignominious mishap which one will never be able to mention to one's friends without being sniggered at. That, and being laid up in Uncle Richard's house, of all places in the world! I suppose he is in a thundering rage, isn't he?’

‘He did not appear to be so,’ Matthew replied. ‘I think he was a little bit afraid that I might seize this opportunity of representing myself as his medical attendant, and he wanted to make out that it was I who had caused your accident; but he was kind enough to offer me dinner.’

‘Well, you'll get a good dinner, anyhow. And by the way, you must be about ready for it. Please go down and refresh yourself, and don't bother any more about me. I shall be all right with my man to look after me. He knows my little ways and won't quarrel with me for cursing him, as I dare say I shall, every time he moves me. What a mercy it is that I have brought him with me! I was within an ace of leaving him in London, because Uncle Richard hates having strange servants in the house, and a more cantankerous old beggar than my dear uncle I have never yet met. It is the chief aim and object of my



life to keep friends with Uncle Richard, but I haven't made a bright success of it so far. Now go and get your dinner. Very many thanks to you for your clever treatment of me.'

Matthew's surgical treatment was always clever; but this particular case had afforded him no scope for doing more than any ordinary country practitioner could have done. Still it is never disagreeable to be thanked, and he went downstairs very well pleased with his new acquaintance. As for the dinner which was presently set before him, and which was deftly and silently served by the butler, it was beyond all praise. Now, Matthew, as has already been hinted, was not indifferent to creature comforts, while he loved small refinements. The spacious, well-warmed dining-room, the excellence of the subdued taste displayed in its furniture, the few admirable modern paintings which adorned its walls—all these things appealed to him; nor did he fail to take note of the thoughtfulness which had spared him the annoying and superfluous presence of several domestics. Mr. Litton, it was evident, was not only blessed with a first-rate *chef*, but with a delicate appreciation of the manner in which solitary guests ought to be entertained.

'Cantankerous he may be,' Matthew mused, after he had been left by the butler with cigarettes and a cup of coffee; 'but he can't be altogether selfish, or it never would have occurred to him to let me smoke in his dining-room. He himself doesn't look at all like a smoker. Still there's no knowing. If that nephew of his doesn't please him, he must be hard to please, one would think.'

That was exactly what the majority of Leonard Jerome's friends, some of whom likewise enjoyed the privilege of a slight acquaintance with Mr. Litton, did think. A man who couldn't get on with Jerome must be an ill-conditioned sort of old fellow, these sagacious persons were wont to observe, and it was really very hard lines on poor Jerome that he should be compelled by considerations of ordinary prudence to visit his uncle three or four times in the course of every year. The only consolation for them and for him—especially for him—lay in the thought that he would doubtless reap his reward ere long, Mr. Litton being over seventy years of age and visibly breaking up.

Meanwhile, Leonard Jerome was not so badly off but that he could very well afford to wait for a year or two. He had a property of his own in the far north of England, upon which, it is true, his income did not enable him to reside; but as he had not the slightest wish to reside there, this could hardly be regarded



in the light of a privation. His place was let, and he received a rent for it which, together with the interest of the personal property which he had inherited from his late father, sufficed to provide him with the means of leading a gay bachelor existence. And his existence, so far, had been gay enough to render those occasional duty-visits to Wilverton Grange quite endurable, by way of an alterative. What with his good looks, his well-known expectations, his proficiency in games and field-sports, and a certain vague, yet not wholly undeserved, reputation that he enjoyed for being cleverer than his neighbours, he was in immense request, and always had more invitations of one kind and another than he could possibly accept. Of ready money he had, if not quite as much as he wanted, at least as much as he had any business to want. He could hunt and shoot and yacht and give excellent little dinners to those whose hospitality he felt disposed or bound to return. There were many ladies who were of opinion that he could also marry; but he had not as yet felt either bound or disposed to do that. So, upon the whole, he was a very enviable young man, and it was scarcely wonderful that he should be a very amiable young man into the bargain. If amiability be not the outcome of an excellent digestion, a comfortable pecuniary position and freedom from worry, physiologists must know much less about us than they pretend to know.

To whatever causes it may be due, and whatever excuses may be urged on behalf of those who do not possess it, amiability remains an attractive quality, and Matthew Austin's liking for this spoilt child of Fortune ripened into friendship all the more rapidly because it was reciprocated. It was, perhaps, not absolutely necessary that he should drive out to Wilverton Grange every day during the week that followed; but he found time to do so, and his visits were hailed with such joy that he was tempted to prolong them to the last available moment. Indeed, it was impossible to help liking and sympathising with an unfortunate fellow who, after the first day or two, felt perfectly well, yet was condemned to absolute dependence upon others and kept his temper through it all.

'There is this to be said for your comfort,' Matthew remarked, one afternoon, 'that you will be out and about again a good deal sooner than most men would, because you don't fuss and fret.'

'Oh, I daren't,' returned the other, laughing; 'I'm like the blind, who are always supposed to be such nice, cheery sort of people. They know very well that it would be as much as their place was worth to be anything else. If only I had the free use

of my arms, my language would be something awful; but, as it is, I'm bound to be polite to a charitable man like you or I should lose the only jolly hour out of the twenty-four. Just you wait until I cease to be a mummy, and see if I don't punch your head for you !'

'It will be some little time before your arms are strong enough to do that, you will find,' observed Matthew.

'Will it? Then perhaps I'll let you off. More especially as I am under some slight obligations to you. I'll tell you what it is, Austin: you may not be aware of it, and I don't suppose you are, but you are one of the very best fellows that ever stepped.'

'Because I sit and talk to you when I can?'

'Well, that is one sign; but you have betrayed yourself in other ways. You will never make your fortune, my dear Austin—it is easy to foresee that—but you will always have just as many friends as patients. Which is probably what you would prefer.'

The two men had become intimate and had learnt a good deal about one another during those daily hours of companionship, which had not once been intruded upon by the master of the house. Of that eccentric recluse Matthew had seen nothing more, while he understood that his patient had seen very little; but on this occasion, just after the doctor had risen to depart, there came a smart rap upon the door from a stick, followed by the entrance of Mr. Litton.

The old man advanced towards the fire, held out a small, wasted hand to Matthew, and then, turning to his nephew, said, rather coldly: 'I hope you are better to-day.'

'Oh, I'm getting on, thanks,' answered Leonard.

'I am glad to hear it. This will put a stop to your hunting for the remainder of the season, I presume.'

'Well, I suppose so. It can't be helped.'

'It might have been helped; but that, to be sure, is your affair rather than mine. You will now, I should think, have had enough of balancing yourself on the top of a wheel, in emulation of shop-boys on Saturday afternoons; so that you are, perhaps, to be congratulated on your experience. It is a pity that you should be deprived of hunting, though. Hunting is not an intellectual amusement, but it is certainly preferable to gambling at Monte Carlo, which is the only alternative I know of open to a man of your tastes during the latter part of the winter.'

'What a charming way you have of putting things! As a mere matter of detail, I have only once been to Monte Carlo in my life, and on that occasion I lost the large sum of ten pounds.'

Still, if it makes you any happier to call me a gambler, pray do so. Any stick is good enough to beat a dog with.'

'I believe I am correct in saying that you do gamble. Whether at public or at private tables is not very much to the point.'

'All right; I'm a gambler. Now can't we think of something a little more pleasant to talk about?'

But Mr. Litton evidently did not wish to be pleasant. He had—as Matthew divined at the time, and afterwards ascertained for certain—that querulous temperament which is more common amongst women than amongst men, which sometimes goes with physical deformity, and which seeks quarrels rather in the hope of a subsequent reconciliation than out of any ill-will towards the person quarrelled with. Such a man was naturally incomprehensible to a robust young athlete like Leonard Jerome, who saw no fun in snapping and snarling, and who, if his uncle had been poor, instead of rich, would doubtless have turned his back finally upon that cross-grained relative long ago.

There was more snapping and snarling in the course of the next five minutes than could be listened to with comfort. Of course young people resent injustice—not having yet had time to learn that injustice must be accepted, with a shrug, as one of the unavoidable accompaniments of terrestrial existence—and although Mr. Litton deserved the disrespectful retorts that he received, it was rather painful to notice how he winced under them. Matthew, being fond of young Jerome, wanted to get away, and took the first opportunity of making his escape. But hardly had he closed the door behind him when it was reopened to give egress to Mr. Litton, who struck his stick sharply upon the floor to attract the retreating doctor's attention and then beckoned him back.

'Are you in a hurry?' the old man asked. 'If not, I should be glad to have a word or two with you. Did you, by chance, read last week's *Lancet*?''

Matthew had read it, and had also perused an article upon which, to his surprise, Mr. Litton began to talk with evident knowledge of his subject. The article in question had dealt with the treatment of a rare and obscure malady, and Mr. Litton gave reasons for differing from the writer which, if not altogether novel, were entitled to consideration.

'Why, you are almost as well posted up as I am!' Matthew exclaimed, in astonishment. 'When did you study medicine?'

'In my spare moments, which are only too numerous. The greater part of my long life has been made up of spare moments, and I have studied many arts and sciences—to very little purpose. A few months of practical experience outweigh years of laborious reading. That is why I wanted to ask you whether, in any of the London hospitals, you had come across a case of the kind described. You used, I know, to do a good deal of hospital work before you got that nasty scratch which so nearly put a stop to your investigations for good and all.'

Nevertheless, it was not for the sake of adding to his store of medical erudition that Mr. Litton was detaining the young doctor, with whose history and present mode of life he incidentally displayed a somewhat startling familiarity. Matthew divined that much after professional topics had been dropped and he had been conducted into his host's picture-gallery, where there were some fine examples of the early Italian and Flemish schools. He was likewise acute enough to guess what was coming; and it came when Mr. Litton had proved himself as well acquainted with the technicalities of the pictorial art as with several other subjects which had cropped up in the course of his monologue.

'I see,' the old gentleman remarked at length, 'that you have a receptive mind. You don't know much about art, but you would like to know more, and you recognise that our bodies are not the most important part of us—though a physician might be excused, if anybody could, for thinking so. I wish you could manage to impart a few germs of infection to that nephew of mine!'

'Oh, he is young yet,' answered Matthew. 'His mind won't serve him any the worse in years to come because he is sensible enough to keep his body in good condition now. He will do, Mr. Litton.'

'No, he won't,' returned the other sharply. 'At least, I doubt very much whether he will. Do you imagine that he is one of those brainless, good-tempered, muscular youths who sow their wild oats in due course and settle down into useful, steady-going country gentlemen? If you do, you are a worse judge of character than I should have taken you for. No, Mr. Austin; Leonard Jerome is no fool, and it follows that he can't fool away his youth with impunity. I don't mind telling you another thing: he won't be allowed to fool away my money after I am gone, much as he would enjoy doing so.'

'But is he fooling away his youth?' Matthew asked.

'That is a matter of opinion. I call it folly, and worse than folly, to live only for self-indulgence and for so-called sport. I grant you that an ass may do that without particularly suffering from it; but Leonard has talents, and if he doesn't choose to use them, he will assuredly end by misusing them. Nemesis is not a mythical goddess—or rather, her existence rests upon the truth which is the foundation of all myths. Why isn't he in Parliament? He might be, if he cared to take the necessary steps and go through the necessary preliminary training. But I need not ask you why, since I know. It is because he is too lazy and too selfish.'

'I think you are rather hard upon him,' Matthew said.

'You won't think so when you know him better. I can see that you and Leonard are going to be friends, Mr. Austin, which is my reason for speaking to you in this way. You may have some influence over him, and you may advance his worldly prospects by exercising it judiciously. I need scarcely tell you that he is only here with a view to the advancement of his worldly prospects. My poor house would not often have the privilege of sheltering him if he thought that I intended to bequeath all I possess to public institutions and charities—a thing which I may very possibly do, by the way.'

'It is a great pity,' Matthew observed musingly, 'to be so suspicious. Suspicions of that kind have a tendency to bring about their own justification—just as a man may make himself genuinely ill by morbid fears of illness. You ought to fight against them, instead of nursing them.'

Mr. Litton stared. He was quite unaccustomed to being addressed with so much freedom, and he was not sure that he liked it. He ended, however, by breaking into a short laugh and remarking: 'You are not greatly in awe of me, Mr. Austin, it seems.'

'Why should I be?' Matthew asked, with a pleasant smile.

'Ah, that I can't tell you; only most people are. Even my nephew is afraid of me; though there isn't much reverence connected with his fear, I suspect. No doubt he has told you in well-chosen language how profoundly he dislikes me and how he wishes that I would die and have done with it.'

This was a rather awkward question to answer, backed up as it was by the steady gaze of a pair of penetrating grey eyes; but Matthew could reply truthfully: 'He has never expressed any wish for your death in my presence. I believe he is under the impression that you have a profound dislike for him, and it isn't very surprising that he should be under that impression, is it?'

‘Possibly not. Well, Mr. Austin, I won’t keep you any longer. Will you permit me—as an old man, who may claim the privilege of taking certain liberties—to say that, whether I like or dislike my nephew, I like you? I shall always be glad to see you, and my library contains a number of medical works which you might perchance care to consult at one time or another. As to Leonard, I dare say you will not forget what I have said about the probable effect of your influence upon him.’

Matthew went away half amused and half touched. Neither his influence nor anybody else’s could ever reconcile two natures so antagonistic as those of Mr. Litton and Leonard Jerome; but the simplicity with which the lonely old man had disclosed his craving for an affection which was certain to be denied him was pathetic enough, and it seemed at least possible that some *modus vivendi* might be brought about which would enable him to sign, with a clear conscience, the will that he so evidently desired to execute. Meanwhile, the confidences of the uncle and the nephew gave a fresh interest in life to one whose solicitude about the affairs of other people had become slightly diminished of late by an unwonted difficulty in forgetting his own.

---

## CHAPTER XII.

### PHILOSOPHY AND PERVERSITY.

IT stood to reason—or, at all events, Matthew Austin thought it did—that such a girl as Lilian Murray could by no possibility fall in love with a man of his age, pursuits and social position. Even supposing that, by some miracle or other, she should come to imagine herself in love with him, it would be out of the question for him to take advantage of a childish illusion. Nothing could be more obvious than that, before making up her mind, she must see the world and its inhabitants, make acquaintance with young men who belonged to her own small section of the community and realise—as no doubt she would—that she had hitherto lived in blank ignorance of certain indisputable facts.

But he had to repeat these reflections to himself with great frequency and insistence; because Lilian’s demeanour towards him was not at all unlike what it might have been if she had suspected his feelings and had returned them. During those weeks when he had good-naturedly devoted all the time that he could spare to



chatting with Leonard Jerome, he had not, of course, neglected Lady Sara, whose progress towards recovery, though well maintained, had been somewhat slow, and, as a natural consequence, his interviews with Lady Sara's daughter had been of daily occurrence. In after years he looked back upon those interviews with a queer sort of wonder and sense of unreality. It is trite enough moralising to say that we change as we grow older, and that, although we continue to bear the same name and carry about with us a body which is more or less the same, we are no longer the same men and women that we were five or ten years ago. Yet nobody quite believes this, and everybody is apt to be startled when the fact is abruptly brought under his or her notice—which, to be sure, very seldom happens.

Anyhow, that was a happy time for Matthew, notwithstanding the misgivings which he was quite right to entertain and even the occasional moments of self-reproach which would have been more of a trouble to him had he been less free from personal vanity. Doctors and clerics are accustomed to being adored by women. They make mental deductions, unless they are downright fools, and know, or ought to know, pretty well what such adoration is worth. Probably, however, it is not altogether disagreeable while it lasts.

Now, by way of changing a subject which, if persisted with too long, became a little trying to his modesty, Matthew was wont to talk to these ladies about such of his patients as he thought likely to interest them, and chief among the number was, as may be supposed, the luckless Mr. Jerome, with whom Lady Sara in particular manifested much sympathy, not unmingled with curiosity.

'You really must introduce him to me as soon as he and I are in a state to be introduced to one another,' she said. 'From what you tell me, I am sure he is just the sort of young man I should like.' She added, with a slight laugh, 'Perhaps—who knows?—he may also be the sort of young man whom Lilian would like. And when he succeeds his uncle, he will be rich, will he not?'

Matthew did not wince. He had been inured to speculations of that kind by many previous speeches of a similar nature, and he only replied: 'Well, as I have told you, it isn't certain yet that he will succeed his uncle. I haven't a doubt that you will both like him, though, and I will try to arrange a meeting by-and-by. Would you, when you are able to leave the house, care to come and look at my azaleas some day? If so, I might exhibit Jerome at the same time.'



Lady Sara said that would be delightful, while Lilian, on being subsequently informed of the treat in store for her, remarked that there would be no harm in having a fourth person.

'He will do to amuse mamma while you and I poke about the house and the garden,' said she. 'I am dying to see your house. I know it will be charming, like everything else about you.'

Matthew laughed and replied that the house really was charming, although nobody had told him before that everything else about him was. 'But it will be more in accordance with the fitness of things that I should entertain your mother,' he continued. 'You and Jerome will have my full leave to poke about the premises to your heart's content.'

'If you dare to treat me in that way,' the girl returned, quite as much in earnest as in joke, 'I will never forgive you! I hate young men! They always think it their duty to talk nonsense to young women, even when they could talk sense if they chose. And that isn't always.'

'You won't find them so hateful when you have seen a little more of them,' Matthew observed tranquilly.

Nevertheless, he could not help being glad that Lilian was not consumed with anxiety to meet this particular young man, and he left the house in one of those elated moods to which he had become subject, despite his conviction that there was nothing to be elated about. A more reasonable cause for satisfaction awaited him, on his return home, in the shape of a letter from his brother, who had apparently developed a patronising sort of interest in Spencer Frere, and who wrote to say that very encouraging reports had reached him with reference to that scapegrace. Sir Godfrey had good reason to believe—so he stated—that in six months' time, or possibly even sooner, the wished-for commission would be made out. He thought the young man's friends might be glad to hear of this.

One of them, no doubt, would; and Matthew was a little ashamed of himself when he remembered how long it was since he had held any communication, direct or indirect, with her. Because repeated refusals to dine with her parents could scarcely be counted as even indirect communications with Miss Frere. He had been obliged to decline those invitations, which had included an entreaty that he would spend a part of Christmas Day with his hospitable friends; his time had been so fully occupied that it had been out of the question for him to eat his meals at regular hours—much more so to eat them in other people's houses. But the real truth was that he had almost forgotten Anne Frere; and that was

why he now took himself to task, wondering what excuse he could trump up to secure a few minutes of private conversation with her.

His good luck and poor Mr. Frere's misfortune solved that problem for him nearly as soon as he had begun to debate it. A heated groom from Hayes Park brought him a note, adorned and emphasised by many italics, in which Mrs. Frere besought him to come to her aid without delay. 'George has got one of his *very* bad fits of gout,' the distressed lady wrote, 'and is literally *roaring* with it! I don't suppose you can do much, for I know by experience that nobody can, but I think it would relieve him a little to swear at you, and I am *sure* you won't mind if he does. I have entreated him to swear at me, but he seems to doubt whether that would be right—which of course it wouldn't. Besides, it is just possible, after all, that you may be able to recommend something. So do, *please*, come as soon as you can.'

Matthew responded to this pathetic appeal with all possible despatch; and if he was not actually sworn at by the prostrate sufferer, he was given to understand in so many words that he and all the other members of an honourable profession were no better than a pack of charlatans.

'God bless my soul!' Mr. Frere exclaimed, 'I don't want to be told that I must have patience. As if I didn't know that! Why, I'm a monument of patience—an overturned monument—ask my wife if I ain't! What I want is something to relieve me of this infernal agony, and there isn't one of you who understands his trade well enough to give me what I want. Well, there!—I didn't mean that, my dear Austin; you mustn't mind me. I dare say you understand, at all events, that a man isn't responsible for his language when he is being tortured as I am now.'

'Oh, but we are not quite so incompetent as you make us out,' Matthew answered, cheerfully. 'I can promise you relief in a very short time, and when this bout is over—as it soon will be—you will feel all the better for it.'

The terrible ladies who, a few years ago, used to be so fond of grabbing reluctant acquaintances by the wrist and, after a solemn scrutiny of palm and fingers, announcing what his or her proclivities were, professed in a great many instances to have discovered the existence of a 'healing hand.' Perhaps not a large number of the persons to whom this mysterious virtue was ascribed really possessed it; but Matthew Austin ought certainly to have been included in that select band. It was always said of

him in his hospital days that his touch seemed to soothe where that of his colleagues necessarily gave pain; and Mr. Frere wonderingly admitted as much after the medicated wool in which his foot was swathed had been removed and replaced.

'I don't know how on earth you manage it, Austin,' the old gentleman said, 'but you have positively made me easier, instead of hurting me. Even Anne can't do what you did just now without hurting me like the devil, and Anne is the only person in the house who is fit to come near a gouty patient.'

'Is it she who nurses you?' Matthew inquired, hoping that, in that case, it would not be long before she made her appearance.

'She does little things for me; I'm not quite reduced to the necessity of having a nurse yet,' answered Mr. Frere, who was still rather cross and ready to take offence, though less disposed to execrate the whole race of doctors than he had been a few minutes before. 'But I must say for Anne that she tries her best with everything that she undertakes. You may have noticed that.'

'Yes, I have noticed that. She has strong affections, too; I should say.'

'Oh, all women have strong affections: the trouble is that they are apt to bestow them unworthily. Anne herself—but I dare say you have heard something, and I don't care to talk about it. Only I know rather more than she imagines.'

Matthew, thinking that he saw his opportunity, ventured to begin: 'If you are alluding to your son——'

'Ah,' interrupted Mr. Frere, speaking in a quiet, decided voice, very unlike that which was habitual to him, 'I suspected that she had mentioned her brother to you. That is why I introduced the subject. Now, I want you to understand, Austin, once for all, that it's a forbidden subject. Anne knows that; but I am afraid she thinks I may be got at in roundabout ways—which is quite a mistake. I have my reasons for acting as I have done, and if you and others set me down as a hard-hearted old brute, I can't help it. Now we'll say no more about the matter, please.'

Thus it is that human nature is wont to turn its back upon itself and perplex the painstaking student. Mr. Frere's words were words of wisdom, but really they should not by rights have proceeded out of the mouth of a choleric old gentleman whose head ought to have been as soft as the heart which he had proclaimed his willingness to hear called hard. In any case, Matthew could but bow to his request and say no more. He remained by the bedside as long as there was any excuse for

remaining; but since Anne neither showed herself nor was, apparently, expected to do so, he had to take his leave at length.

'I'll swallow your stuff, though I don't suppose it will do me one atom of good,' was Mr. Frere's valedictory remark. 'If you come across my daughter on your way out, you might just mention that I haven't been able to read the *Times* yet, because of the infernal crackling that it makes when I try to hold it up to the light.'

As a matter of fact, Matthew did come across one of Mr. Frere's daughters before he had advanced very far along the corridor; only unfortunately it was not the right one. Maggie bounced out from the ambush where she had been patiently lying in wait and, catching him by the arm, implored him to come to the schoolroom with her just for five minutes.

'Backfish is away for her Christmas holidays,' she explained, 'and we have been having a dog-wash. You ought to see them all before they get dirty again. Anne has just finished brushing Snap, and you can't think how funny he looks after he has been brushed!—you won't know his head from his tail. Besides, Anne particularly wants to see you.'

This latter statement may or may not have been true, and was, at all events, quite unauthorised; but it had the desired effect. Matthew gladly consented to be led off to the schoolroom, where there was no light save that of a roaring fire, in front of which Anne, on her knees and with her sleeves rolled up above her elbows, was putting the finishing touches to the toilet of Snap, the Skye terrier. Other dogs of various breeds, who had already been subjected to the same painful process of dressing, were grouped round her and were listening, with cocked ears and saturnine amusement, to the snarls and protests of the victim. They all with one consent turned and flew at him on his entrance, while Snap hastened to seek shelter under the nearest bookcase.

'I ought to apologise for this intrusion,' Matthew said, as soon as he could make himself heard above the din, and when Maggie, by dint of vigorous flips with a wet towel, had dispersed her excited pack of pets, 'but I was dragged here by main force, whether I would or not.'

Anne had scrambled to her feet and was hastily pulling down her sleeves. She wore a long brown-holland apron, her fair hair was disarranged, her cheeks were slightly flushed, and Matthew could not help noticing how handsome she looked, although at that time he had practically no eyes for more than one variety of feminine beauty or more than one possessor of it. But if Anne

looked handsome, she certainly did not look as if she particularly wanted to see him, nor was her reply of a nature to bear out her sister's assertion.

'Maggie can't realise that what is a treat to her isn't necessarily a treat to other people,' she said, with an annoyed, constrained laugh. 'I am sorry that she has forced you behind the scenes against your will. However——'

'Oh, but indeed it wasn't at all against my will,' interrupted Matthew eagerly, before the discourteous intimation which was evidently upon the tip of Anne's tongue could find articulate expression. 'On the contrary, I was looking out for you to give you a message from your father. I was to say that he can't read the newspaper for himself, on account of the rustling of the leaves, which gets upon his nerves, and——'

'Oh, very well,' answered Anne, interrupting in her turn. 'Thank you for telling me. I will go to him at once.' And she made straight for the door.

But Matthew could not let her escape him in that way. He hastened after her, pacifying the loudly protesting Maggie by the promise of a speedy return, and, catching up the fugitive in the passage, said: 'Please don't run away until I have read you an extract from Godfrey's last letter about your brother. I thought you would like to hear what he says.'

She was, of course, glad to be made acquainted with the hopeful terms of which Sir Godfrey had made use, and she said as much when Matthew had folded up the letter again; but she spoke so coldly and curtly that he ventured to inquire, with a faint intonation of reproach:

'Is anything the matter? Have I offended you in any way?'

'Oh, dear, no!' she returned, with the same vexed, unmirthful laugh which had jarred upon his ear a few minutes before; 'how could you have offended me when I haven't even seen you for weeks? *Vous tombez mal*—that is all. I am in what Maggie calls one of my beastly moods, and I couldn't be civil to the Queen herself while they last.'

'I am sorry for that,' said Matthew, 'because I suppose a beastly mood means an unsociable mood, and I was just going to beg you to do something sociable.'

'What—again! I should have thought that the striking success that I made of it last time would have convinced you of my hopeless unsociability. Were you about to invite me to meet Lady Sara Murray and her daughter at tea?'

'There is no use in denying that I was,' answered Matthew, with a deprecating laugh. 'I wish you liked them; but as you don't, it can't be helped; and, after all, it was not so much them whom I wanted you to meet as a young fellow named Jerome, whom I have been attending since he smashed himself up a short time ago. I am almost sure you would like him, because I don't see how anybody could help liking him.'

He gave a brief account of Leonard's mishap and of his consequent intimacy with the sufferer, to which Miss Frere listened rather inattentively. She knew quite well who Mr. Jerome was, it appeared, but she had as yet had no opportunity of making his personal acquaintance, and she gave much the same reason as Lilian Murray had done for declining that held out to her.

'I don't like young men, and they don't like me,' she said; 'we never by any chance get on together. So please don't think me rude for begging to be excused. I should only be a wet blanket and spoil your party if I joined it. As it is, you will be four—which is quite the right number. For I hear that you have snatched Lady Sara back from the brink of the grave to act as chaperon a little longer. By the way, I ought to have congratulated you upon that achievement of yours: everybody is talking about it.'

'Matthew glanced half-wonderingly, half-resentfully at the speaker; he had supposed that Anne Frere was above the petty spitefulness which is commonly attributed to all women.

'I don't want to be congratulated in that tone of voice,' he said. 'It *was* an achievement, and I am proud of it; but I really didn't do what in me lay to keep Lady Sara Murray alive for the purpose that you mention.'

'Did I not tell you that I am incapable of civility to-day! You had much better go away before I commit some further solecism in good manners; and I am sure you ought to be grateful to me for resisting the temptation to make a fifth at your tea-party. Probably you are.'

Perhaps he was. At all events, he was more hurt and provoked than a philosopher should have been, and for the moment he felt that he decidedly preferred the society of Maggie and the dogs to that of a young woman who seemed bent upon saying disagreeable things out of sheer perversity.

(To be continued.)



### THE ROMAN 'INDEX.'

As it has always been the concern of governments to protect the bodies and property of the members of their community from physical violence, so it has often been considered not without their province to fence their fellow-citizens against the intellectual attacks of the written or printed offspring of the human brain. Books are, indeed, as Milton said, 'not absolutely dead things;' yet it would seem to have been usually forgotten that to kill the body is not to extinguish the soul, and that the prohibition or destruction of particular books has not the effect of putting an end to their peculiar ability to 'contain a progeny of life in them to be as active as that soul whose progeny they are.'

A glance at the history of books which have from time to time been prohibited will show the antiquity of such efforts. In 411 B.C. the Athenians 'called in the books of Protagoras by the voice of the public crier and burned them in the market-place,' because he had ventured to doubt the existence of the gods. At Rome during the Second Punic War a *senatus consultum* ordered that all books containing soothsaying, or prayers, or treatises on the art of sacrifice should be given up to the Prætor on a certain day. This edict was prompted by fear of the growth of foreign superstitions. Augustus, again, in his capacity of Pontifex Maximus, consigned to the flames over two thousand volumes of the writings of seers. He even did not scruple to destroy in the same way the works of political opponents such as Labienus. In later days, it is hard to say whether Jews and heathens were the more severe in the suppression of Christian books, or Christians in banning heathen works. At all events, the Council of Carthage, 400 A.D., prohibited the use of all Pagan books, and Gregory I. is said to have issued a Bull to the same effect. On the other hand, St. Jerome approved of the moderate use of the classics, and tradition relates that he suffered, in a dream, a terrible whipping at the hands of the Devil for reading Cicero—which proves that much good is to be derived from the study of that author. Another story runs that St. Chrysostom was so fond of the works of Aristophanes that he used to sleep with a volume of them under his pillow. Cassian makes Germanus the monk ground his advice to abstain from even the more innocent of



heathen authors on the 'distractions that arise during prayers from images suggested by poetry and history.'

The first General Council to order the burning of books was that assembled at Constantinople in 681 A.D., when the Monothelite letters of Honorius were thus destroyed. The works of Arius met a similar fate at the hands of Constantine, in accordance with the decision of the Council of Nicæa, and all who harboured them were threatened with death. Again, all Christians were forbidden by the Church of the thirteenth century to read Aristotle. It is well known with what opposition the early versions of the Bible were met. In the twelfth century the Waldenses had possessed themselves of the New Testament in their vernacular, but Innocent III. commanded the books to be burnt. The appearance of Wyclif's translation was no better received in England. A bill for the suppression of the work was discussed in the House of Lords in 1380. John of Gaunt, however, said 'he would maintain our having this law in our own tongue, whoever they should be that brought in the Bill;' and the matter dropped for the while. Subsequently, it was made a capital crime to read or possess such a version. For a long time, indeed, *Tolle ure, tolle ure*, rather than the well-known words in the legend of St. Augustine, might have been the motto of the Church.

Nevertheless in all these prohibitions, though absolute and at times rabid enough, there was no system. It remained for the Inquisition and the Pope to organise deliberate campaigns against books at large. Their efforts resulted in the promulgation of the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, with which is incorporated the *Index Librorum Expurgandorum*. From the latter title the publication obtained its more popular but less correct name of *Index Expurgatorius*. The volume now contains considerably over five thousand books recited by name, besides whole classes of writings. Yet its beginning was small. From very early days Bishops had exercised the right of excommunicating those who read or wrote books of which they disapproved, and, partly for their guidance, a list was drawn up at the end of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century. At least, the earliest *Notitia* is attributed to Gelasius in 494 or Hermisdas in 514 A.D. Not improbably, however, it does not date back beyond the eighth century. In this list all Apocryphal and pseudo-Apostolic books are entirely prohibited, while in some other cases a qualification is made. For instance, with regard to 'new narratives of the

Invention of the Cross and the Invention of the Head of John the Baptist,' it is directed, 'when they come into the hands of Catholics, let the sayings of the blessed Paul the Apostle go before: Prove all things: hold fast that which is good.' Or, again, the inquirer is referred—*e.g.* touching the works of Rufinus or Origen—to the judgment and advice of St. Jerome. Though this list may certainly be considered the original ancestor of the Roman *Index*, it was many years before the lineage of its descendants was well established.

In the meantime, Popes and Bishops did their best by Bulls and charges to stem the rising tide of independent thought. Book censors were established. The earliest known instance of the creation of such an officer is afforded by the mandate of Berthold, Archbishop of Metz, in 1486, which forbade the translation of Greek or Latin into the vulgar tongue, or the sale of such translations without leave given, after careful examination, by certain Doctors and Masters of the University of Erfurt. Similar powers were also exercised over religious books in various places by universities and bishops, and even, in some cases, by civil magistrates. Moreover, the Master of the Sacred Palace at Rome possessed very wide and searching authority in these matters. Yet all these efforts did not suffice to cope with the new condition of things produced by the spread of printing. So dangerous a means of dissemination seemed to lie in this newly-discovered art that the Council of Lateran, in its tenth session, held during the year 1515, issued a decree that no book was to be printed and published until it had been examined and approved by some high ecclesiastical authority. Contravention of this rule entailed sentence of excommunication, as well as confiscation and destruction of the book. In a similar spirit, though with a more particular object, Leo X., in 1520, promulgated a Bull demanding the surrender of all the writings of 'one M. Luther,' upon pain of the greater excommunication. This Bull was executed in England, with considerable reluctance, by Cardinal Wolsey, and proved to be very nearly the last successful exercise of Papal authority in this country; for, by the year 1535, Henry VIII. had broken away in the opposite direction, and was directing all his energies against Rome. Indeed, Protestantism, when established in England, proved no less intolerant than the creed it superseded; and it was—to anticipate a little—the attempt to set up a censorship of the press during the latter years of Charles I. that drew from Milton

the greatest of his prose works—to wit, the *Areopagitica*. In this pamphlet he brings all his powers of argument, sarcasm, and exhortation into play for the purpose of dissuading the English authorities from adopting the 'inquisitorial' practice of the Romanists, who acted 'as if St. Peter had bequeathed them the keys of the Press as well as of Paradise.'

Returning from this digression, we find ourselves at the very birthday of the *Index*. In the year 1539 the zealous Charles V. of Spain, supported by a Bull of Paul III., charged the University of Louvain with the task of drawing up a list of pernicious books. The result of their labours was the publication in 1546 of *The Catalogues or Inventories of Bad Books Prohibited, and of other Good Ones to be taught Young Scholars according to the advice of the University of Louvain, with an Edict of His Imperial Majesty*. In the same year an order went forth from the Council of Trent that no anonymous religious books were to be permitted, unapproved, among good Christians. A second edition of the *Catalogue* was produced in 1550. Meanwhile the Popes had not been idle. Paul III. had issued a Bull in 1536 excommunicating and anathematising Luther and all other heretics, and those who should read, print, defend, or harbour any of their works. This is the Bull *In Cæna Domini* which is quoted in the first Roman *Index*, soon to be noticed, and has never been repealed. At one time it used to be read every Holy Thursday at Rome, and, except for considerations of policy, might to this day be republished at any moment.

Again, in 1542 the same Pope, by a Constitution beginning '*Licet ab initio*,' instituted the *Congregatio Sacri Officii seu Inquisitionis*—a committee of about twelve persons selected from the body of Cardinals, meeting in the Holy City, and nominally presided over *ex officio* by the Pope. His object was to combat more successfully by weighty and authoritative pronouncements the doctrines of Luther. Not content with this work alone, the Congregation prepared and published in 1559, under the auspices of Paul IV., the first Roman *Index*. The entries occupy thirty-six leaves, and are divided into three classes, of which the first comprises the entire works of certain authors; the second, particular books; and the third, all books published anonymously since the year 1519. In the first and second classes the *Notitia* of Gelasius is practically reproduced, with additions. A list of sixty-two printers is appended for condemna-

tion, and, in addition, the writings of all heretics are utterly prohibited *donec expurgentur vel corrigantur*. This is the seedling from which have since sprung all those 'catalogues and expurging indexes that rake through the entrails of many an old good author, with a violation worse than any could be offered to his tomb,' to quote Milton's words. To this date must be assigned the birth of those constant obstacles which it has been the complaint of so many great writers that Rome has put in the way of the progress and intellectual growth of the world. During the sixteenth century the *Index* was an engine for the suppression of Protestantism; since then it has been used to stigmatise every manner of original thought as heterodoxy and an abomination.

In a very few years a further advance was made. The Council of Trent took the matter up, and, after discussing it during their eighteenth session, appointed Fathers to examine books at various times censured. These delegates produced on March 24, 1564, an enlarged edition of the *Index*, usually known as the Tridentine Edition. In this the list of books was preceded by a Bull of Pius V., a preface by the secretary to the Congregation, and also by ten rules setting forth the principles upon which books were condemned. They are briefly as follows: (1) All books prohibited before the year 1515 are hereby condemned. (2) Books written by heretics are condemned *in toto* if on religion; if on other subjects, until they have been expurgated and approved. (3) Translations of the Old Testament are allowed to learned and pious men at the discretion of the Bishop; translations of the New Testament by authors coming under Rule 1 to no one. Notes on the Bible must first be expurgated. (4) Versions of the Bible in the vulgar tongue allowed only by special permission of the Bishops. (5) Compilations by heretics to be first corrected. (6) Controversies between Catholics and heretics forbidden. Books of Catholics previously prohibited allowed after correction. (7) Lascivious or obscene books forbidden. Classical authors allowed because of the elegance and propriety of their language, but young persons are not to read them. (8) Books of generally good tendency to be rid of all passages tending to heresy and of references to heretical authors. (9) Books on sorcery, astronomy, the science of poisons, &c., prohibited, except when in aid of navigation, agriculture, or medicine. (10) The old restrictions on printing renewed and confirmed. Finally, the rules are clinched by the sentence, 'If any man read or keep any books composed by

heretics, or the writings of any authors suspected of heresy or false doctrine, he shall instantly incur the sentence of excommunication; and those who read or keep works interdicted on another account, besides the mortal sin committed, shall be severely punished at the will of the Bishops.' These rules still guide the preparation of the *Index*. The list of condemned Bibles and printers included in the first *Index* are here omitted. There is also another curious difference between the two publications: in the former, certain works of Æneas Sylvius are condemned wholesale; in the latter the entry runs, 'Those parts of the works of Æneas Sylvius are prohibited which he himself in his Bull of retractation has condemned.' It was probably considered inexpedient that the works of a Pope should be thus under a ban; and he is reported to have said himself 'when he was raised higher he saw things more clearly.' The entry in the first *Index* must have been either an oversight or else prompted by some motive, perhaps personal, which did not actuate Pius V. The works of Machiavelli appear in the *Index*, and have retained their place ever since. Boccaccio's *Decameron* figures as the only book in this edition specially marked '*donec corrigatur*.' It was afterwards purged of its offences against the religion of Rome, but not of its obscenities. About the date of the publication of this *Index*, Pius V. built a special place for the deliberations of the Congregation of the Inquisition, and also founded the *Congregatio Indicis*, a co-ordinate body for the purpose of cataloguing books prohibited, pending correction, by the other Congregation, and of registering on its own account a preliminary *nota* against books of which it disapproved.

Sixtus V. was preparing an enlarged edition of the *Index* when he was interrupted by death in 1590. His work was suppressed; but Clement VIII. enjoyed the fruit of his labours, and produced in 1596 an *Index* which with supplements at intervals has since been practically the standard edition. Of subsequent issues, that put forth by Clement XI. in 1711 is chiefly remarkable on account of its frontispiece, which represents the Apostles Peter and Paul, 'into whose breasts the Holy Spirit sends fire and His rays, so that they leap forth upon books beneath and kindle a great flame and destroy them.' In most other volumes, continuing to the present time, the frontispiece consists of a picture illustrating the nineteenth verse of the nineteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Those who are responsible for this decoration seem unconscious of the satire

involved in the contrast between the voluntary action of the persons to whom the verse refers and the compulsory fate to which the *Index* would consign its victims. Benedict XIV., in 1758, published one of the most important of the Indices. He made sundry alterations, notably in the matter of versions of the Bible in the vulgar tongue. Clement VIII. had forbidden them entirely; Benedict allowed them after approval by some representative of the Apostolic See. He also insisted that all expurgated books should be announced as such in the title. Prefixed to the edition of 1758 are certain rules to be observed in the examining of books, which are still in force. They are introduced by the Pope with the admission that there was some dissatisfaction abroad because books seemed sometimes to be condemned unjustly under the influence of current public opinion. He upholds the integrity of the Congregation and its judgments, and at the same time insists that the whole of every book must be read, and that no one is to talk about the deliberations of the examiners outside their meetings. Heresies, even when stated for the purpose of refutation, are to be cut out. This direction agrees with the tenour of the Bull by which Paul IV. introduced his original *Index*, which began: 'Many of the regular clergy, who thought they could combat the Lutheran and other heresies of the day by studying their works, have so devoted themselves to this study as to have fallen themselves into the errors of the heretics.'

There is one curious publication which was suppressed as soon as possible, and has never been repeated. This is a veritable *Index Expurgatorius*, of which one volume was issued in 1608 by Brasichellen, the Master of the Sacred Palace. In this work the author essays to expurgate, and gives reasons for so doing, all works which in former Indices were condemned to that fate. The matter, however, was too controversial and full of difficulties to be allowed, and the second volume did not appear.

About forty editions have been published since the *Index* of 1596, and the first of the small periodical volumes, which continue to appear at the present day, came out in 1670. The last is dated 1888, and additions have been made since that date, the last author to be gibbeted up to the present time being Professor St. George Mivart, in consequence of his articles on 'The Happiness in Hell' a few months ago in the *Nineteenth Century* magazine. He has since retracted those writings, and finds consolation in the fact that one of the half-dozen or more reasons for which books may



be put on the roll of the condemned is that of inopportuneness. Perhaps, therefore, his name will not appear on future lists. But he would have found himself in good company. Owing to the indiscriminate way in which the names of authors and works are mixed up, in the former case being often arranged under the Christian names—the largest number of entries occur under the letter J, because John is a common name—it is somewhat difficult to discover who are among the victims of Papal censure. However, a glance will disclose many well-known names. James I. and Henry VIII. appear as prohibited authors, an exception being made in favour of a tract issued by the latter king against Luther. Nearly all the English poets figure on the list, headed by Milton, Spenser, and Chaucer; Dryden forming a notable exception. Dante is there for his treatise on Monarchy, and Petrarch also. Addison, Swift, and Oliver Goldsmith are side by side with Bacon, Galileo, Robertson, and Gibbon. Philosophers are thick, from Locke downwards, including Rousseau, Hume, Kant, and John Stuart Mill. Voltaire is proscribed, and Victor Hugo appears thus: 'Hugo, Victor, N.D. de Paris, an. 1834, Dec.' However, it were weary work to count up further entries: suffice it to know that prohibition has never been able to check the vital force of genius; indeed, it may be said to have the opposite effect; as Milton points out in his *Areopagitica*, 'the punishing of wits enhances their authority, and a forbidden writing is thought to be a certain spark of truth that flies up in the faces of them who seek to tread it out.'

It is not intended here to describe in detail the method of work of the Congregations. They toil in secret, and spend much time and care. The best intellects of the Church are assisted by experts on the subject of each book under consideration, and a work has to be condemned by several successive readers and meetings before it is reported to the Pope. When that stage is at last reached, the Pope can adopt one of four courses. He can allow the Congregation to issue the condemnation on their own authority, in which case the matter may at some future time come up again for consideration. Or he can have a sentence of approval added, such as 'The above proceedings have been duly reported to our Most Holy Lord the Pope by me, the undersigned, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation: His Holiness approves the Decree, and orders it to be promulgated.' Or, thirdly, the Pope can issue the decree authenticated by a Bull, Brief, or Constitution; if he

does so, the pronouncement is final, infallible, and held to command 'internal assent.' Or, fourthly, he can quash the verdict of the Congregation. Sometimes the exercise of the Pope's authority in this matter has caused trouble. For instance, in 1862, Cardinal de Andrea resigned his position as Prefect of the Congregation of the *Index* because the Pope overruled a formal sentence acquitting, after two examinations, the Professors of Theology and Philosophy at Louvain. They had been accused by the Archbishop of Bruges of heterodoxy for teaching that 'men in a state of nature are incapable of attaining, by their unaided reason, an immediate, full, and distinct knowledge of any metaphysical or transcendental truth.'

In spite of the pains bestowed on its compilation, and the weight supposed to attach to its pronouncements, the influence and use of the *Index* is very problematical. Probably very few besides students know anything of its contents, and Dr. Murray, Archbishop of Dublin, went even further in his evidence in 1825 before a Committee of the House of Commons to inquire into the state of Ireland. He said, 'The *Index Expurgatorius* has no authority whatever in Ireland: it has never been received in these countries; and I doubt very much whether there be ten people in Ireland who have ever seen it.' However, the history of this literary policy of suppression as pursued by the Church of Rome is interesting for the indication it gives of a curious survival of the old forms of paternal—not to say maternal—government, in accordance with which it was deemed the whole duty of man to attempt—in the scornful language of Milton—to 'pound up his crows by shutting his park-gate.'

## FAMOUS FIRST EDITIONS.

OF the many crazes which infect book-collectors, few are, to the general public, more singular than the taste so rampant of late years for assembling first editions of favourite authors. If these first issues were invariably the best and most desirable form in which the works were given to the world, one could understand the eager haste with which the enthusiastic bibliophile rushes off to secure the prize run to earth in catalogue or auction list; but this is by no means the case as, more frequently than not, a book is improved in later editions. One great exception of course holds good, and will appeal to everyone who gives the question a moment's thought—illustrated works, in which the repeated printing of the engravings naturally lessens their freshness and brilliancy, but in other cases the Philistine may well argue *cui bono*? Yet a little reflection will convince some beyond the charmed circle of book-hunters that there is sometimes a reasonable 'method' in the 'madness' of those eccentric individuals who have a penchant for First Editions (underlined for large caps. in the catalogue). Who, for instance, can flout the sentiment which prompts a desire to possess a copy of the renowned First Folio, that volume so grandiloquently described in auctioneers' brochures as 'the keystone of an English library'? Here we have the thoughts of the mighty Shakespeare in their first collected printed form, in the case of seventeen plays in the original garb of printer's ink through which they became known to wondering mankind.

Surely a little enthusiasm is allowable here. Never was there a volume which has caused so much controversy and argument. It has been measured up by eighths of an inch, counted in lines, reckoned by page, by letter, nay, even by stops and omissions, and made the subject of thick treatises which try to prove it something different to what it is, and its author a myth. It was published at a guinea; in 1787 a copy sold at auction for ten pounds; and to-day a fine specimen would not fall for less than fifteen hundred! What a history for an unpretentious tome of old plays! But even more precious are those squat quartos which represent the absolutely first editions of many of the bard's productions. It is a little singular how few of them have survived.

Heaps upon heaps may very likely have been made food for bonfires in the stern days of the Ironsides and the strict fanatics who took away England's pleasures and gave her her liberty, yet one would expect to meet with more copies. They were issued at sixpence, most likely on somewhat the same footing as the acting plays of Mr. French in the Strand, dear to the ambitious amateur. Their money value must now in some instances be reckoned in three figures, while many are almost, if not quite, unique. Of the first quarto Hamlet, in many respects the most interesting and attractive of the immortal series, only two examples are known, both of which are defective, though the two together would make a perfect copy. The Duke of Devonshire's has the title page, but lacks the last leaf; in the Museum copy the exact reverse is the case—a curious coincidence.

Plays of this period generally are much esteemed and eagerly sought for in first edition, and all collectors are familiar with these thin quartos, often sumptuously clad by Bedford or Rivière, which represent such a high and ever-increasing money value. Whether this be an indication of growing interest in matters theatrical or, as is more probable, a recognition of their importance as factors in our literature and faithful pictures of their times, it were perhaps difficult to satisfactorily decide.

The works of that singular individual John Taylor, 'The Queen's Majesty's Water-Poet,' are favourite quarry with the hunter after Tudor rarities. The first collected edition, a thin folio, has an engraved title seldom found in genuine or perfect state, the National copy even leaving something to be desired in this respect. Taylor was an alarmingly prolific writer, whose separate pieces are in many cases of extraordinary scarcity and equally extraordinary title, as for instance: 'The Scourge of Baseness: a Kicksey Winsie or a Lerry Come Twang, wherein J. T. hath satyrically suted 750 of his bad Debtors.' 'Laugh and be Fat.' 'The Praise of cleane Linen.' 'The Needle's Excellency,' a rare tract on lace-making, and many others quite as singular in their appellation, and trashy in their contents, from which latter peculiarity one must imagine it to have been as easy to appear in print in the time of Queen Bess as in the present day of grace.

A famous first edition of a little later date is the 'Eikon Basilike' of the unfortunate Charles I. No one seems to have properly settled the question as to what identifies the original issue. Most copies are dated 1649, but those bearing 1648 are described as

‘Reprinted,’ so it is a little perplexing. It is possible this word may have been added to guard the publisher against the consequences of printing the work.

The Commonwealth period does not present many prizes to the collector, but there is one famous exception the mention of which makes many a mouth water—‘The Compleat Angler of Mr. Izaak Walton.’ This insignificant duodecimo volume, not remarkable for any especial literary merit beyond an easy, cheerful, chatty good-humour, interlarded with technical information about a strangely fascinating sport, occupies one of the topmost niches in the huge temple of British bibliographical fame. ‘Worth its weight in gold’ is a very inadequate expression, the number of sovereigns its value represents would overbalance many copies. Its companion volume, the second part, by Charles Cotton, was not issued from the press until twenty-three years later, and naturally increases the already stupendous price when found with the earlier work. The perennial popularity of ‘Walton’s Angler’ is very remarkable. Seldom a year passes that does not witness its reissue in some form or another, either delicate and dear for the connoisseur’s shelves, or commonplace and cheap for the traveller’s pocket. There is a charm about the book which time apparently cannot destroy.

The first edition of Waller’s poems is another volume to be marked ‘very rare,’ although its value does not approach that of honest Izaak’s masterpiece.

Three editions were published in the same year, 1685, giving opportunity for discussion to any enthusiasts so minded, although priority is accorded the one ‘Printed by G. W. for Humphrey Moseley.’ It is one of the tantalising books of which many exist to give the ardent bibliophile anxious half-hours and even sleepless nights.

The early eighteenth century literature offers a rich and well-cultivated field to the seeker after interesting books. The array of great names is a formidable one, and reminds us of the earlier Elizabethan era. Defoe, with his interminable list of tracts, pamphlets and volumes, a list even now and ever likely to be incomplete, offers alone almost a lifetime’s occupation to the admirer of first editions. Many, in fact the majority of his lesser efforts, never went beyond this initial stage, but in the case of his books there is often great difficulty in obtaining the earliest issue.

‘Robinson Crusoe’ and its continuation are of course the chief

stars in the Defoe firmament. The two volumes were published in different years, 1719 and 1720, and the earlier is a rarity of the first water.

One small difficulty which exercises collectors' minds is the map.

The title-pages read as though each volume should possess a plan of the supposititious island whereon 'Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner,' passed so much of his singular existence, whereas one only is wanted. Truly the way of the book-buyer is beset with snares and pitfalls! Defoe must have lived with a pen in his hand, but his great romance will live ages after the political and controversial tediousness which flowed so freely are forgotten.

The caustic Dean of St. Patrick's is another favourite hobby of this age. His 'Tale of a Tub' and 'Gulliver' are both eagerly sought for, the former entering into the category of perplexing books owing to variations on the frontispiece which make the identity of the first edition a moot point, but in this respect a work by another 'Queen Anne man' certainly bears away the palm. The difference in the engraved titles of Pope's 'Dunciad' and 'Dunciad Variorum' are such that nothing but exclusive devotion to the subject can pretend to satisfactorily solve the question of priority, and even then much doubt remains. What the author's purpose may have been in altering his title-page in this way is perhaps as obscure as anything in literature. Possibly he had future bibliomaniacs in his eye, and enjoyed the mental prospect of their debates as to the position of the owl, the titles of the books on which that sage bird is perched, or the authenticity of the humble donkey who makes his appearance in 1729. After 1736 the frontispiece disappears from the work, and no doubt many collectors heartily wish it had never been there to perplex them. The first collected edition of Pope's works forms two quarto volumes published at an interval of eighteen years, 1717-35, but does not rank as a rarity, although some of the separately issued editions in folio are carefully cherished by fortunate possessors who, like Mr. Austin Dobson, worship at the eighteenth-century shrine.

The publications of the genial Goldsmith, few in number, but how choice of quality! have some of them attained a scarcity and value which would make poor Noll's eyes open wide in amazement could he revisit the shades of Fleet Street, in which case he might also for ever settle the question as to the Salisbury edition of 1766



being the first appearance of the immortal Vicar. Sixty pounds was his moderate honorarium for one of our most charming classics. A few weeks since a single copy reached the amazing figure of ninety pounds, at auction! This is honouring genius when too late with a vengeance.

It is somewhat singular that the first edition of so renowned a book as Boswell's 'Johnson' should be worth no more than the two or three guineas at which it can usually be purchased.

It may be that its form, two thickish quarto volumes, militates against it ranging as a 'collector's book,' for it is remarkable what a dislike even confirmed book-fanciers have to anything beyond an octavo in size, and many a work owes its popularity to its natty appearance on the shelf. There is something reasonable in this after all, for who could wax enthusiastic over an *editio princeps*, say, of Bayle's 'Dictionnaire Historique,' 5 vols. folio, or any kindred mammoth among books?

When we arrive at the nineteenth century we reach the beginning of the most singular phase of the first edition mania, the passion for collecting the works of modern authors in their original dress. True, the writers of the early years of eighteen hundred are removed from us by almost too many years to be classed as 'modern,' but the craze for collecting their productions has been the instigation of that fancy which prompts people to buy up Morris, and Lang, and Dobson, and has brought in 'limited editions' as a fresh means of stimulating the jaded appetite of the rarity seeker.

It is the poets, almost exclusively, who are favoured. Shelley, Keats, Landor, Byron: these are all names to conjure with, and some of the insignificant little volumes in shabby grey boards, or even simple brochures innocent of covering, are worth to-day sums which seem abnormal. Some of the pieces by Shelley, that erratic yet heaven-born genius, are utterly lost to us; others so rare that their pursuit is all but hopeless. What, for instance, would an example of 'Verses by Victor and Cazire,' or 'Margaret Nicholson,' fetch now? while a copy of the 'Address to the Irish People,' which fluttered from the ardent young poet's Dublin window in such profusion yet failed to accomplish its object, is literally worth its avoirdupois equivalent in bank-notes! In the same way the early productions of the gentle Keats are valued and sought for. Paltry volumes they appear, such as might easily be cast aside in looking over the twopenny box at a bookstall, should any such

rarities be left now to be merged in the mass of worthlessness which passes yearly through the hands of the dealer.

The chance of finding a prize under these conditions grows feebler day by day, and there is very scanty encouragement for the collector who hopes to turn up a 'Lamia' in boards, uncut, for fewer pence than it is worth pounds.

Most of the first editions of Byron are comparatively common, but there are two exceptions, the 'Hours of Idleness' and 'The Waltz.' As all students of our great nineteenth century poet are aware, his earliest volume, published in 1806, was immediately suppressed and the copies destroyed, with the result that about two or one-and-a-half are preserved. The next issue was a very limited one for friends, and this was followed by what is generally looked upon as the first edition, published by Ridge, of Newark, in 1807. Of course to all intents and purposes this latter is the first edition, as the absolute original is practically unobtainable, and the reissue almost equally rare, indeed the existence of this intermediate edition is altogether unknown to a good many book-buyers.

'The Waltz, by Horace Hornem,' is a very great Byronic rarity, and a copy has realised over forty pounds at auction, but the later publications of the author of 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers' were issued in such great quantities to meet the popular demand for the works of the hero of the hour, that there is little chance of their attaining such places of honour in the collector's eyes as are occupied by the productions of Shelley or Keats.

We have now arrived at the threshold of contemporary times, but although the list of great names in literature cannot be said to have increased of late, the passion for gathering first editions, even of living authors, has spread and intensified in a truly remarkable manner.

Among the writers of fifty, forty and thirty years since, Dickens and Thackeray, of course, usurp chief place, and theirs are the works most eagerly sought. One can appreciate the enthusiasm exhibited in the possession of a really genuine 'Pickwick' in its original pale-green covered parts, when we remember how few copies were issued of the first few numbers, and how consequently difficult it is to make up a set. There is perhaps nothing more remarkable in the annals of modern literature than the history of this book, issued at one shilling per part, and sold since for as much as thirty-two pounds!

## MAJOR KINFAUN'S MARRIAGE.

'Twas a terrible nemesis that befell poor Major Kinfaun. He deserved it, no doubt—if every man had his deserts, indeed, which of us would 'scape whipping? But who that sees Kinfaun to-day, for all that, can refrain from pitying him?

He met her, when anemones bloom, at Antibes, at that charming hotel on the Cape, pushed far out into the sea, where you look one way across the Baie des Anges towards Nice and Bordighera, and the other way, across the Golfe Jouan and the Isles, towards the jagged outline of the rearing Esterel. Not that Kinfaun himself cared two straws in his heart for any of these things. Anemones and dandelions were all one to him. It was the rich young widow, or the young widow reputed to be rich, that brought the politic soldier to Antibes. For himself, he vastly preferred Cannes—that worldly Cannes, where the breath of princes hangs heavy on the air, and grand-dukes and bankers pullulate by the score upon every bristling hillside. That was the sort of atmosphere that Kinfaun loved; he drank it in, princely carbonic acid and all, with pure delight. It made him feel happier to pass a man in the street and be told he was really a small crowned head; it made him stand higher in his neat walking shoes to tread the same pavement worn smooth by the soles of so much Serene and Imperial Altitude.

But Kinfaun had always a keen nose for an heiress, and taking his walks abroad between Californie and the Croisette, he scented the young widow at Antibes afar off. For the sake of being near her, he was ready, like a thorough-going strategist that he was, to scorn the noisy delights of Cannes, and live ignoble days, through a brief courtship at least, by the water-worn cliffs and dashing breakers of the Cap d'Antibes. So he drove across with his port-manteau one March morning from the Prince de Galles, where he had been spending the winter; drove across, characteristically enough, in the young Comte de Kérouac's high dog-cart; for no man ever knew better how to make the best use of all his friends than Angus Kinfaun. The whole plan fitted in so neatly together. De Kérouac suffered severely from the fashionable *anglomanie*; he dressed himself in very loud sporting tweeds, chequered like a

chess-board, and owned a dog-cart; to him, nothing could be in better form or better keeping than to have an English officer seated beside him in the machine as he drove; he regarded it as *tout ce qu'il y a de plus sportsman*. Kinfaun, on the other hand, considered that he couldn't make a better first impression on the widow's hotel than by dashing up to the door in a neat turn-out, with a Breton count in stentorian tweeds by his side, and the trimmest of trim close-shaven French grooms stuck bolt upright behind, arms crossed severely on his swelling breast, and face like a sphinx in the act of ruminating upon her own riddles. Things get about so quickly at hotels in these twaddling, gossiping winter stations. Everybody would say to the widow at *table d'hôte* that evening, 'Have you seen the new arrival who came over from Cannes by road to-day? He wears an orchid in his button-hole, and De Kérouac of the Réunion wheeled him across by the Pines in his dog-cart.'

The value of a first impression in affairs of the heart cannot be over-estimated. And Kinfaun was indeed a man to make a good impression at first sight. Tall, well-knit, with his soldierly imperial and twirled moustache just becomingly grizzled by the first snows of the forties, he looked and stood every inch a gentleman. Those keen grey eyes and that well-bred nose of his showed just enough of their owner's cynical temperament to be merely piquant. His manner was frank, yet delicately deferential: the manner of a man of the world who knows well how to please, and who has ample reasons of his own for the wish to be pleasing. If Kinfaun had made up his mind to win the widow, everybody said—why, then the widow must be hard indeed to win if she resisted Kinfaun.

Fortune favours the brave. He came upon her by accident in a lucky moment, the very first afternoon he spent at the Cape. He had wandered out after lunch to enjoy the fine aroma of his cigar in the grounds, among the scent of the pine woods, and strolled down to the little bay by the craggy promontory where the sea always dashes high, one side or the other, no matter what wind may happen to be blowing. There, in a nook of the cliffs—for they descend by natural steps in the living rock to sea-level—a vision of delight met his enraptured eye. He knew at once it was the widow; it could only be she, according to description. She was thirty-five, to be sure, but round-faced and gracious-looking; a taking smile played enticingly round the corners

of her full red lips, though she was quite alone; she was fishing up sea-anemones out of a pool with her parasol as she sat: the sun shone on the sea, and the waves danced merrily. Kinfaun gazed down on her intently for a minute before she was aware of being perceived. It brought the colour into her cheek when, looking up, she saw a man stand by the edge of the cliff, gazing down upon her hard, yet with a sympathetic curve about the corners of his mouth; but she smiled once more that taking smile, and to his immense delight, being taken off her guard, spoke to him unaccosted.

'It's a beautiful spot, this,' she said, 'so quiet and retired.' She said it to cover her confusion, he knew, half out of the mere bashfulness of having been caught, alone, in that childish attitude, fishing in the pool with her parasol; but he counted it all to the good for his scheme nevertheless. For a woman to speak first to you of her own accord is the best of all possible introductions.

Kinfaun flung away his cigar at once. He flung it into the sea; not ostentatiously, yet with such a deferential little air of instinctive courtesy that the widow could hardly fail to notice the graceful action. As a rule, you may smoke when you talk to a lady; to smoke is mannish; but on first acquaintance, it looks well, nevertheless, as a matter of form, to abjure your tobacco. It shows that you value a stray moment of the lady's conversation far more than you value any ephemeral joy to be derived from the best half of a prime Havana. And besides, it's chivalrous. For the first few stages chivalry pays; after them, a certain bold and even obtrusive masculinity has the greater attraction. The veriest old maids will sometimes confess they like the smell of tobacco; it shows there's a man about the house, and to have a man about the house is eminently respectable.

'Delightful,' he answered from under that grizzled moustache, with his own most charming responsive smile, as he flung the cigar away. 'So far from all the bustle and noise of Cannes! The very kind of place for people who love calm and quiet,' for he saw at a glance what was the widow's line. 'So breezy and open, and with such lovely views too.' And he lifted his eyes from hers quite naturally for a second towards the long jagged line of that indented Esterel.

It was just as he did so that the cigar struck the water.

'Oh, I'm so sorry you've thrown it away,' Mrs. Roupell cried, watching the splash where it fell.

Kinfaun came down tentatively a couple of steps along the broken ledges towards where she sat; he felt the sacrifice of so much good tobacco entitled him at least to make that further advance in her direction. To have thrown it away was an earnest of good-will. Then he leant against his stick behind him and gazed down with peering eyes into the pool. 'What wonderful creatures one always finds in these rock-basins,' he went on abstractedly; though, to say the truth, he had never hunted them since he was a boy in knickerbockers, wading on the sands. 'And what lovely colours they take on the Mediterranean seaboard here!'

Mrs. Roupell dipped down her parasol into the fishery once more, and hooked out some sea-mats. She seemed by no means indisposed, for her part, to continue the conversation. 'You've only just come?' she said interrogatively, as she examined her find with half-affected interest.

'Drove over from Cannes this morning,' the major answered, still leaning back on his stick and gazing down intently into the shallow basin. 'I was tired of the eternal round of tea and tennis, gout and gossip, so I thought I'd come over here for the strolls and the scrambles.'

'I saw you come,' Mrs. Roupell went on, spreading out the sea-mat on the rock by her side; and Kinfaun scored one internally with joy that the dog-cart and the groom had not passed unnoted. 'You're quite right. The walks here are charming: especially in and out, in and out, round the coast. Such endless little bays and points and headlands. If scrambling's what you like, you've come to the right place for it.'

'I adore scrambling,' Kinfaun answered, with a glance at those neat walking shoes, descending just a step, and poking his stick into the pool in turn in search of anemones. 'This seems quite an ideal hotel for anyone to stop at who loves nature.'

'And you should see the flowers in the woods!' Mrs. Roupell replied with enthusiasm.

So at the end of ten minutes, by perfectly natural gradations, Kinfaun was seated on the rocks opposite the pretty widow, and deeply engaged in profound conversation on scenery, Keats, and the human affections. For Kinfaun was a clever fellow at bottom in spite of his society airs and graces; and though his knowledge of men and books was by no means deep, it was as wide as it was shallow. He could mould his talk to suit his hearer with an accommodating versatility which many abler but less shiftier talkers might well have envied him.



Before they got up from the rocks that afternoon, Kinfaun had succeeded in making his impression. The pretty little widow, reputed rich, thought him a most charming and sympathetic man, and the pleasantest companion she had met since she came to Antibes.

That same evening Kinfaun found himself alone in the billiard room, over a cigar and a brandy and soda, with Marindin of the Record Office—the very man who had given him the first stray hint as to the existence of a wealthy young woman, now unattached, awaiting siege at the hotel on the promontory.

‘Pretty little body enough, that Mrs. Roupell,’ he remarked casually, as he knocked about the billiard-balls for pure practice (he was a first-rate player). ‘Middle-aged, of course, but extremely well-preserved. I like what I’ve seen of her. And her smile’s so pleasant.’

‘Yes, we’re all immensely taken with her,’ Marindin answered languidly, between the long slow puffs. ‘She’s such a nice little thing, so kind-hearted and good-natured. She takes my little girl out driving almost every afternoon. Polly’s quite in love with her.’

Kinfaun pricked up his ears at the sound. ‘Driving,’ he repeated. ‘Then she drives a good deal, does she? Has she got a carriage?’

‘Hires one from Cannes by the month,’ Marindin replied laconically. ‘Neat turn-out: couple of greys, coachman in livery.’

Kinfaun pretended to be profoundly absorbed in a difficult cannon he was endeavouring to pull off by a miracle of rebounds, and walked round the billiard table in the most leisurely fashion to survey the best point from which to accomplish it. ‘Then she’s really well off?’ he said, with insinuating inquiry, as the balls kissed and glided off gently at the exact angle required.

‘Oh, I s’pose so,’ Marindin answered, throwing back his head and blowing out a long round stream of tobacco smoke. ‘She’s never told *me*. The precise amount of her income is, no doubt, a question that lies only between herself and the Commissioners of Inland Revenue. But to judge by what she spends, I should say she can’t be penniless.’

To judge by what she spends indeed! What a fatuous criterion! Kinfaun totted up the total mentally. After all, it needn’t mean so very much. Mrs. Roupell herself, her maid, and

no children: first floor rooms, table d'hôte, and salon: say eleven pounds a week, all told, for hotel-bill. Well, she might live like that, carriage and dress and travelling expenses included—a lone lorn woman—for a trifle over seven or eight hundred a year, he fancied. It wasn't princely, but still—it was a competence. And a competence, you know, is always something. Kinfaun didn't feel sure that he cared to chuck himself away this time for so little. It was all very well, sentiment, when you were young and foolish; but when the first snows of the forties begin to grizzle your well-waxed moustache—by Jove! sir, a man begins to know his market worth, and determines to sell himself at the highest current quotation for cavalry officers.

For Kinfaun, too, had once been young, and like all the rest of us had committed a youthful indiscretion. He had married for love at three-and-twenty. His wife, to be sure, had a couple of hundred a year or so of her own in consols; but what was that to Kinfaun? A man of his tastes finds two hundred a year and one's pay mere beggary. Ah, well! poor Mrs. Kinfaun was dead and gone long since, however—died a twelvemonth ago at Cannes, where he had come for her health, for in his way he was fond of her; and now that the year of decent mourning was fairly over, and the Kinfaun moustaches were once more in the market, he hadn't the slightest intention of repeating in maturer years that one error of an otherwise blameless and strictly prudent existence.

So he surveyed the balls again, with his head on one side, deliberative of point and twist and impetus; then he remarked at last, after he had taken his stroke and scored once more, 'You've no idea what part of the world she comes from, have you?'

'Not the slightest,' Marindin answered with perfect unconcern. 'That's the oddest part of it all. She's a lady, obviously, well-bred and well-educated; but not a soul in the place knows anything of her antecedents. We only gather from casual allusions in her talk that her father was a parson somewhere down in the Midlands, that the late lamented Roupell made money in the City, and that she has a house of her own somewhere or other in England. But she seems anxious not to let one know too much. My own idea is'—and Marindin fixed his glassy eye hard upon Kinfaun—'that she wants to keep out of the clutches of fortune-hunters.'

Kinfaun's hand never faltered in the least, though this was a most difficult stroke with the cue behind one's back; but he went on quietly: 'Ah! I shouldn't be surprised. So many fellows are

on the trail of money. And the other little woman, with the invalid husband—Mrs. Percival, I think they called her—what sort is she, now?’

So the talk glided off imperceptibly by gradual degrees into less important channels.

But for the next three weeks or so poor Kinfaun was sedulously engaged in playing a very distracting and disquieting double game. On the one hand, he didn't want to begin advances towards Mrs. Roupell unless he could find out whether or not she was really worth marrying; and, on the other hand, he didn't want to throw away a chance which might not again occur under such favourable circumstances. Those lonely walks and up-and-down scrambles among the cliffs and rocks, with their quiet little nooks where two human souls could sit alone together so long unperceived, seemed as if absolutely predestined by nature for the precise purposes of love-making and flirtation. But Kinfaun felt he mustn't be too precipitate. For aught he knew to the contrary, the woman might be nothing more after all than the merest adventuress. She might be living on her wits—perhaps on tick, perhaps on false pretences. One must be very cautious at these foreign watering-places and winter stations. One never knows what society one may be thrown among. So different from the pure and guileless drawing-rooms of our immaculate London!

So Kinfaun was prudent, consummately prudent. He played his hand dexterously in this dangerous double game of his. He went on getting deeper and deeper into Mrs. Roupell's confidence—picking anemones and grubbing up fern roots—while he prosecuted his researches privately into her position and history with the utmost care, and at the same time avoided too overtly committing himself to anything which couldn't be explained away at a moment's notice as the merest flirtation or botanical interest, should the result of his inquiries prove unsatisfactory to the widow's chance of meriting so great a prize in the matrimonial lottery.

But with all his caution and all his careful searching, Kinfaun after all could find out nothing. Nobody anywhere knew aught worth hearing. Hints, doubts, suspicions, exaggerations by the score, but not one ounce of solid fact or assured certainty. She was worth nothing; she was worth a hundred thousand; those were the conflicting items of evidence that baffled a poor unoffending fortune-hunter. Kinfaun almost gave up the quest in despair. He

couldn't bear to let the young widow, reputed rich, slip through his fingers; but he couldn't bear, either, to commit Angus Kinfaun and all his fortunes to so profound an uncertainty.

As for Mrs. Roupell, confiding and childlike in everything else, on that point of her money value she was a perfect marvel of feminine silence. No matter how delicately Kinfaun approached the crucial question of her private means, by graceful lateral avenues or quick flank surprises, she seemed to descry from a distance whither all his gentle advances tended, and to erect at once between problem and solution some subtle impalpable stockade of womanly reticence. All he could gather, and that dimly, from her infrequent hints, was that her marriage with the late Mr. Roupell had been a marriage of convenience, arranged for her by her parents, whence it might perhaps be fairly inferred that the late Mr. Roupell was a man of substance—else why should those worthy parents have selected him as the convenience in question for their own daughter? But had the late Mr. Roupell inserted in his will any ugly clause about 'so long as my said wife shall continue to live unmarried'? That was the doubt that chiefly tortured poor Kinfaun's mind, as the widow grew every day more and more visibly and demonstrably in love with him.

For the widow *was* in love; of that there could be no question. A gentle, shrinking, womanly little woman, who seemed as though her heart had been too long repressed, she accepted Kinfaun frankly as just the man he put himself forward to be (anemones and all) and gave him her confidence (in all other matters) as freely as he asked for it. And since love is catching, even with men of Kinfaun's temperament, that middle-aged cynic began before long to avow to himself, somewhat shamefacedly indeed, yet none the less candidly, that he was really very fond of that pretty simple little smiling woman.

One wild hope he clung to, as he floundered deeper and deeper in the slough of entanglement with a person of unascertained wealth and indeterminate position; surely so sweet a little soul, who was so unaffectedly in love with him, could never dream of deceiving him about her worldly prospects! And though she implied nothing else, she always implied she had enough to live upon, which left a vague sense in the background of infinite possibilities unspecified and unhinted.

Once, on the rocks, as he sat alone behind a jutting point, Kinfaun overheard her saying to Mrs. Marindin, 'Oh, yes,

indeed; if ever I married again, I should like to feel my husband married me for no other reason than because he loved me.'

Then she must be rich; rich enough to attract the attention of fortune-hunters!

So at last that very afternoon, ten minutes later, Kinfaun felt a crisis had arisen where he must madly plunge or give up the widow for ever. Nothing venture, nothing have; and he decided on plunging. Brave soldier that he was, he took his life in his hand, and asked the little widow for her hand and heart, not only gracefully, but even poetically.

As he spoke, Mrs. Roupell blushed rosy red, like a girl of fifteen, and her bosom heaved and fell; but she turned to him with all a true woman's confidingness, and she answered him 'Yes,' like one whose life-dream has at last come true after many long days of watching and waiting.

And before Kinfaun knew how things would turn out, it was all arranged for, almost without his willing it—a consular marriage, and that day fortnight.

He had plunged indeed, and the next two weeks were weeks, for him, of suspense and torture.

For as soon as everybody knew how all was arranged, everybody began to indulge in shrugs and hints and sinister suggestions which nearly threw poor Kinfaun's mind clear off its balance. Or, what was still worse, they asked him questions—inconvenient questions that he couldn't answer. Where was Mrs. Roupell's place? Who was Mrs. Roupell's first husband? What was Mrs. Roupell herself worth? and other equally rude and impertinent inquiries. Kinfaun kept his temper under these inflictions as well as he could; or, what was still better policy, pretended to lose it with becoming dignity. But in his heart how he wished he could only answer them!

So the fortnight drifted away, and on the very day before the one that was fixed for the marriage, Kinfaun as yet had found out nothing worth speaking of about his future wife.

In his anxiety to secure the rich young widow, as she was reputed to be, he had pushed matters forward a little too hurriedly, and now he was beginning to regret his precipitancy.

That day, to get over the tedium of waiting, he went into the Réunion at Cannes for half an hour. On the tennis-lawn he met Sir Richard Goldwin, fresh arrived from London, and new to the gossip and scandal of the Riviera. They foregathered awhile

about various acquaintances, but before Kinfaun had time modestly to break the news of his own approaching matrimonial projects, Sir Richard remarked in a dubious tone, 'At Antibes, are you? Dear me, why little Mrs. Roupell is there. Have you made her acquaintance?'

He asked the question with so strange a smile that Kinfaun drew himself up and answered stiffly, yet full of curiosity, 'I have, Sir Richard. Do you know anything about her?'

The baronet smiled again and again mysteriously. 'Why, rather,' he answered, with an amused air. 'Last autumn in town I met her at the Fitzgibbons'. She calls herself the widow of some man Roupell, who was something in the City. But who the dickens Roupell was, or whether there ever was a Roupell at all, or how or why she became a Mrs., nobody seems to know. And where the money comes from, I always wonder: but heaven only can tell whether there's any money in the case at all, or whether the good lady lives by her wits and that pretty smile of hers. It's my belief she's the very same woman who did that famous diamond swindle at Pau last season.'

'What famous diamond swindle?' Kinfaun asked faintly, without having the courage to cut him short. And then Goldwin told him in brief outline that whole long story, so famous at the clubs in the year of its occurrence.

As soon as he'd finished, Kinfaun drew himself up and walked away with just a cold 'good-bye.' He was either too proud or too great a coward to tell the whole truth and shame Sir Richard, so he sneaked off, undecided, and went back to Antibes again.

On the way—with many throes—he had time to make up his mind. The risk was too great. He would break it all off, let it cost what it might. He couldn't afford to throw himself away like that on a woman who might turn out to be the merest adventuress.

At Antibes he went straight to Amy's room. It was Amy and Angus between them now; and he really liked her. In a sort of way he admired the woman's pluck and cleverness in so taking him in. But marry the diamond-swindler! Incredible, impossible!

He sat down, and tried to bring things gently to an explanation. But Amy Roupell looked blank into his eyes every time he tried to approach the subject gracefully, and he slunk back disarmed. The tears half started to her lashes at the mere tone of



his greeting. 'Oh, Angus!' she cried, as she took his hand in hers; and it thrilled through and through him. Wish as he might, he hadn't the courage so much as to hint to that beautiful, innocent, guileless child of thirty-five that some one suspected her of being the Pau diamond swindler. He sat long irresolute, while Mrs. Roupell grew sorer and sorer perplexed; then he rose, much dissatisfied at his own weakness. He went to his own rooms, and left the little widow sobbing alone in hers, and wondering to herself what on earth could ever have come over Angus.

All night long he tossed and turned, sleepless. How on earth to extricate himself from this deadly fix he couldn't imagine.

It was an awful night of vile and selfish fears—an unmanly night; but he lived through it somehow. Next morning he felt it was too late to turn back now. Let her be who she might, he couldn't help but marry Amy.

And marry her he did, in fear and trembling. He hated himself for having been so weak a fool; but marry her he did, without even a settlement. On that she remarked once or twice herself on her wedding day. She seemed to take it as a signal proof of his genuine attachment that he should marry her without making any inquiry as to settlements.

And then, as soon as they were irrevocably married, and no way out of it, it being now full May, Mrs. Kinfaun proposed they should return to England. She was anxious to take her husband down to her place in the country, she said; and Kinfaun, for his part, though tremulous for the upshot, was by no means sorry to investigate the whereabouts of that half-mythical estate, whose very existence he had more than once doubted.

On the journey Mrs. Kinfaun was perfectly happy—quietly happy, not like a person, Kinfaun thought to himself, who is just going to be unmasked in a great deception. But still, even now, her references to her place were singularly enigmatical and wanting in precision. All he could learn was that this mysterious place lay in a well-known village of Essex, some thirty or forty miles from town, and with that vague information he was fain perforce to console his mind during the long night he spent in doubt and suspense at the Métropole in London. She had money enough in hand, anyhow, he reflected with pleasure, to stop royally in good rooms at the Métropole.

Next day Kinfaun rose feverish with excitement. That morning was to set its seal upon his future fate. He would be rich or

a dupe, as the event decided. Trembling with anticipations of good and evil, he took his seat in a first-class carriage at Liverpool Street, and was whirled down rapidly to the Essex village.

At the country station a porter came up to the window, all timid respect, and touched his hat to Mrs. Kinfaun with a deferential air of submissive recognition. Kinfaun breathed more freely, and handed him the black bag in even a lordlier style than usual—for he was always lordly. The porter took it, and at the same moment a footman approached with the proper degree of servility which betokens a gentleman's servant in a first-class family. Kinfaun drew a long breath, relieved, but threw his rugs and wraps across the footman's arm like one used to such attendance, and strode blindly out, following his wife, who led the way, with a certain air of half-conscious triumph, to a carriage at the exit. As they passed, the station-master bowed low before them, and the boy at the gate said 'Ticket, sir; thank you,' in that hushed voice with which our labouring class are wont to approach their pastors and masters.

Kinfaun's head reeled as he went. 'This is a very nice carriage, Amy,' he murmured feebly, as he leaned back on the cushions, too much taken aback to speak much. And Mrs. Kinfaun, with that sweet smile growing deeper as she said it, answered, like a child whose little ruse has fully succeeded, 'I'm glad you like it, Angus. I wouldn't tell you anything about the Knoll beforehand, for fear of disappointing you.'

The footman took his seat beside the coachman on the box. 'Home,' Mrs. Kinfaun said, and they rolled along smoothly on those comfortable C-springs. The horse-chestnuts were just coming into the first full leaf, and the flower buds were big almost to bursting on the scented lilacs.

'It's all very beautiful,' Kinfaun said faintly, as at a big entrance the lodge-keeper, watching, flung open wide a massive iron gate. 'I'd no idea, Amy, your place would be anything like so fine as this.'

The tears were standing in Mrs. Kinfaun's eyes, as she bent closer to his ear and whispered low, 'I wanted whoever married me, Angus, to marry me for myself. I know you never once wanted to ask me a single question—except if I loved you.'

But Kinfaun could hardly answer her yet. His heart was too full—in its sordid way. They were driving up through grounds that made his pulse bound and his breath come and go in short

spasmodic jerks. Suburban, new, just fifteen years' growth—no time-honoured oaks, but money, every inch of it. Not so much land, indeed—ten acres or so at best—but laid out in perfect order, as rich men in the city lay out their pet places within easy reach of town, whither they run up daily. A couple of gardeners, with four fellows to help them, Kinfaun estimated roughly. Six thousand a year, at least, if it meant a penny. And how nearly he had been fooled by that croaker Goldwin!

His heart came up into his mouth with horror, to think of the narrow escape he had had not quite a week ago!

The carriage drew up at last in front of the house. Two more men-servants stood there awaiting it. High porch, broad staircase, suburban mansion. Not the fine old ancestral place in the country by any means—large, new-fangled, Queen Anne, red-bricky; but oh, what wealth! What outward and visible signs of it. The late Mr. Roupell must have been rolling in money! Kinfaun put up his hand to his dazed brow. His brain whirled. Everything was new, decorated, and polished throughout. The very steps and porch, with their great Vallauris tazzas and hot-house palms, seemed to reek with riches. The place was magnificent. It dazzled and appalled him.

He followed his wife, faltering, up the broad stairs and into the entrance-hall. Six thousand a year, indeed! It was nearer twenty! The late Mr. Roupell (who, as a matter of fact, had been an importer of tobacco in a well-known firm that bears an older name) had feathered his nest like a bird of Paradise. Kinfaun felt his knees sink bodily under him. The moneyed splendour of the thing, in its ostentatious Philistine way, had fairly overpowered him. He looked at his wife, who turned round to him for his applause, like a simple child that she was; then he murmured in a strangely dazed and far-away voice, 'This is a fine house. I'd no idea your house would be like this, Amy.'

With a tottering tread, he mooned from room to room; hall, ante-chamber, drawing-room, all was money, money, money. He gazed at the walls; they were hung thick with pictures, bearing well-known names, and bought, he couldn't doubt, at fancy prices. As in a dream, he strolled on into the billiard-room, all amazed. Mechanically, he touched the bell, he knew not why; a servant in knee-breeches and powdered hair came in with respectful mien, obedient to his summons. Kinfaun stammered out something

about a brandy and soda ; he felt faint and ill ; so much *grandeur* took his breath away.

His wife bent over him tenderly. 'You're tired with the journey,' she said. 'Come out into the open air. That'll revive you, Angus.'

'No, no,' Kinfaun answered, rising again and rousing himself. 'It's so sudden, so unexpected.' And he nodded his head strangely. 'I didn't anticipate at all so fine a place as this is, Amy.'

He followed her out into the garden. She led him on from plot to plot, from *parterre* to *parterre*. Neat jam-tart crescents, all of them, in smooth stretches of lawn, mown close with velvety sward, in the best and most moneyed style of horticulture. His wife looked at him now and again, half tenderly, half inquiringly. Kinfaun murmured at every turn, 'This is fine, very fine ! Such beautiful turf ! Such well-kept gardens !'

Beyond, there were hot-houses, stables, outbuildings, the appurtenances and belongings of a great domain. Peaches blossomed on the walls ; vines were leafing in the vinery. Kinfaun moved through it all, still dazed and still dreamy. From time to time, he murmured some brief word of approbation. But it was clear he was hardly more than half himself. This glamour of wealth seemed to stun and unman him.

Slowly, by devious paths, through shrubbery and garden, they returned to the house. Kinfaun sat for awhile and tried to talk, but words failed him. He could speak of nothing but the beauty of the rooms, the ground, the pictures. Mrs. Kinfaun looked pleased ; she was glad in her heart dear Angus was so satisfied. Before long, it was time for him to dress for dinner. He went up to his dressing-room. Everything there was of the best, the richest, the costliest. Kinfaun looked every inch a gentleman in evening clothes. He walked down the stairs to dinner, gazing to right and left at the expensive decorations—William Morris, every scrap of them, and Morris is expensive. A Burne-Jones hung incongruously with one by its side ; but what of that ? Kinfaun knew they both cost money. He gave his wife his arm with stately dignity. The dinner was excellent ; a first-rate cook ; good clear soup ; nice smelts ; a capital glass of sherry. When the hock came up, Kinfaun sipped it with gusto and rolled it on his palate. 'Your wines are most choice, Amy,' he said with an effort, for he was lethargic still. 'This is exquisite Johannisberg. I never tasted better.'

Mrs. Kinfaun fairly beamed. If dear Angus was pleased, she was more than happy. He praised the sweetbreads, the asparagus, the hot-house strawberries. They were all of them excellent—and they all meant money.

After dinner, he rose, and gazed blankly at the wall. He paced round the room and examined each picture separately. Then he gazed at the plate, the furniture, the powdered footmen. His head shook strangely. He turned to his wife for support. He staggered, and stood still. She gave him her arm. He looked at her and murmured, 'This is a very fine place—a very fine place indeed. Such splendid plate! such beautiful furniture!'

He doddered as he spoke. His wife gazed at him, terrified. She led him into the drawing-room, and he sank into an easy chair.

'You're ill, Angus,' she cried.

'Oh, no,' he answered faintly, wagging his head up and down, with his mouth half-open, and his eyes staring blankly at the wall before him. 'But this is a very fine place, indeed; a beautiful place. I didn't expect at all so fine a place as this, Amy.'

He looked so strangely unhinged, so changed, as if by magic, that his wife grew alarmed. She rang the bell. 'Send for Dr. Wolcott, James,' she cried to the servant hastily. 'Major Kinfaun is ill. The journey has fatigued him.'

When Dr. Wolcott came Kinfaun looked up at him with a stupid dull look in those keen grey eyes, and hung his chin once more like a confirmed imbecile. 'This is a fine place, doctor,' he drawled out idiotically. 'I didn't expect to find it at all so fine. It must have cost a great deal of money.'

The sudden revulsion, the wild access of wealth, had thrown his intellect entirely off its balance. And to this day, if you venture into the grounds of the big square house where poor Mrs. Kinfaun, that sweet lady in black, with the sad childish face and the great red eyes, lives with her mad husband, you may chance to stumble across a slouching tall man, with grizzled moustache and open doddering mouth (accompanied by a keeper), who will stop you and, pointing to the well-kept flower-beds and the pillared porch, will murmur pathetically, 'This is a fine place—a very fine place. I didn't expect to find it so fine. My wife must be worth a terrible lot of money.'

*DEFENCE NOT DEFIANCE.*

WHEN 'the great and good Linnæus' first saw gorse in blossom on Wimbledon Common, he fell on his knees, says the veracious legend, and thanked God audibly then and there for having created so glorious and unique a combination of colour and perfume. It was a bright sunny day, no doubt, in early spring, and Wimbledon Common must have been somewhat more picturesque in Linnæus's time than in its existing suburban condition; but even so, the act savours of the eighteenth century. Let us frankly admit, between ourselves, 'twas just a trifle theatrical. It reminds one of Gibbon on his own fat marrowbones. The age of the Georges loved these affected little displays of what it called 'sensibility.' The traveller fresh back from Abyssinia or New Holland was expected to go down upon all fours on Portsmouth Hard in the rapture of his return, and kiss with fervour the sacred soil of England. So Linnæus may be excused for his too obtrusive gratitude, to the damage of his small-clothes, on the ground that, after all, he just followed the fashion. A man who really meant it would have abstained, I fancy, from the overt act of falling on his knees, and if he thanked Heaven at all, would have thanked it silently.

On the main point, however, I am at one with Linnæus. Few plants on earth are more beautiful than our English furzes; and an English moor, aglow with yellow gorse and on fire with purple heather, is a lovelier sight than anything to be seen among the unvaried dark green of tropical forests. Moreover, the human race in these islands owes much to those refulgent flowers; for we all know that 'when the gorse is out of blossom, then is kissing out of fashion'; and the gorse has managed, by flowering all the year round, to prevent inconvenience to many million pairs of human lovers. Yet I cannot find that any historian of our flora has yet treated the benignant though prickly plant at proper length in any exhaustive monograph. I propose, therefore, to meet this felt want in the literature of the subject by devoting a few pages of scientific gossip to the various kinds of gorse, their origin, development, and subsequent fortunes.

The life-history of the common furze is a singular and interesting one. In its adult stage, as everybody knows who has ever attempted to pick a flowering branch of the bright golden bloom,



it is conspicuously and I will even venture to say unpleasantly prickly. But as the young Nero refused with tears to sign a death-warrant, and as Robespierre declined a judgeship rather than pass capital sentence upon a fellow-creature, so the many-spined gorse, which in its maturer years sheds your blood without pity, is in its infant stage as gentle and shrinking a plant as that pet of poets, the modest violet. If you take a few little beans out of the ripe pods on a furze-bush and bury them in a flower-pot, you will find the tiny seedlings which sprout from the seeds are entirely ungorselike. They have broad and flattened trefoil leaves—in point of fact they are essentially clovers. You may observe similar trefoil leaves on adult bushes of the pretty yellow genista so commonly cultivated in conservatories and window-gardens. Young gorse-plants when they first come up are to all intents and purposes in the genista stage; it is only as they grow up and begin to realise their proper position in life as furze-bushes, that they set about developing their murderous spines and prickles.

Why is this? Well, the young plant and the young animal often recapitulate to some extent the evolutionary history of their race and species. Thus the common frog begins life as a tadpole, which is essentially a fish with gills and swimming organs; while he ends it as a frog, which is essentially a reptile, breathing by means of lungs, and hopping on all fours on terra firma. So too the human embryo in its earliest stage exhibits gill-slits like a fish's; and, later on, resembles roughly at various times the reptile, the lower mammals, and the ancestral monkey. Now the progenitors of gorse were soft and innocent shrubs with trefoil leaves, like clover or genista; but as they grew for the most part on very open stretches of down or moorland, they were exposed to be eaten down by deer and rabbits, sheep, cattle, and horses. Under these circumstances, only the prickliest and thorniest among them stood a chance of surviving; and, indeed, you may observe that almost all the vegetation on our English commons is well defended by sharp spines against the attacks of herbivores. Waste lands in Britain are overgrown with brambles, blackthorn, junipers, and furze-bushes; while even the smaller plants, like butcher's broom and carline, are offensively prickly. Nay, more: the pretty little rest-harrow, with its dainty purple pea-blossoms, which is commonly unarmed in fields and meadows, has developed on the commons of Kent and Surrey, and on continental waysides, a spiny variety for purposes of self-protection. Only the thistle-

loving donkey and the close-cropping goose can manage to pick up an honest living anyhow on such pungent provender.

So the infant furze-bush recapitulates for us in full the whole history of the origin and development of its species. For when the little beans begin to sprout, the first things to appear above ground are two simple round seed-leaves. These represent for us the fundamental common ancestor of the whole tribe of pea-blossoms; no matter which of them you sow, you will find the earliest stage consists invariably of these two round seed-leaves. The pea, the bean, the furze-bush, the laburnum, the wistaria (which young ladies *will* call 'westeria'), the tiny clover, and the huge American acacia or locust-tree, all alike belong to this single family, readily distinguished from all others by its butterfly-winged flowers, and all begin life, from Alaska to Australia, with the self-same pair of simple round seed-leaves. But next after the round leaves in the seedling gorse come three or four little hairy trefoils, like those of clover or laburnum on a smaller scale; and this second type of foliage is a reminiscence of the time when the ancestors of furze were simple trefoil-bearing bushes exactly resembling the greenhouse genista. Above the clover-like leaves again, the seedling begins to put forth single narrow blades, but flattened and leaf-like, not round and prickly as in the older bushes. Gradually, as the plant increases in stature and wisdom, it learns to produce stiffer and more conical leaves, which pass by degrees into thorns or prickles. In the adult state, all the branches end in a stout spine, and the leaves being also spiny, it requires the eye and the faith of a trained botanist to distinguish between them. But the seedling shoots still give us the history of gorse and its evolution in brief; they supply for us every intermediate stage from the pretty trefoil through the narrow flat leaf, growing rounder and sharper as the stem mounts upward, to the murderous prickles of the full-grown furze-bush.

Our common English broom, which I earnestly trust all readers of this Magazine can distinguish for themselves from furze or gorse, preserves for us in fuller detail certain intermediate stages in this evolutionary history. For in broom, most of the foliage is trefoil throughout; but the upper branches have often solitary leaves, flat and narrow like the intermediate form on the gorse-bush. This last is also the commonest type in most species of genistas. We may therefore say that gorse begins life as a generalised or undifferentiated pea-flower; next, passes through

a condition analogous to that of the trefoil-bearing greenhouse genista; afterwards resembles its unarmed ally, the English broom; and finally develops its own characteristic and specific features as a fully armed furze-bush. Only, the stages which occupy the broom for the whole of its lifetime are telescoped, as it were, in the gorse into the first three weeks of its infant existence.

Leaves are the mouths and stomachs of plants. Their business is to drink in the floating carbonic acid of the air, and to digest it, under the influence of sunlight, so as to turn it from inorganic into organic matter. Now, if you imagine yourself a plant for a moment, you must see at once that by far the most convenient and natural form for your leaves to assume, under ordinary circumstances, is that of a flat extended blade, as in the oak, the beech, the bean, or the lily. This shape clearly allows the greatest possible development of absorptive surface; it gives plenty of room for thousands of the tiny mouths or stomata—microscopic throats, guarded by miniature lips, which open in fit weather and suck in whatever particles of carbonic acid may happen to pass their way. It also affords a broad expanse of green cells for the sunlight to fall upon, and so to effect that disintegration of the elements of carbonic acid which is the prime function of vegetable life. So obviously sensible and useful is this flat form of leaf that no plant in its right mind ever dreams of discarding it except for some good and sufficient reason.

And such good and sufficient reason the furze-bush has for rejecting and discarding it. Gorse is no fool; it knows its own business. It has found out exactly what tactics suit a north-European plant, continually exposed on open plains or hills to the attacks of browsing herbivores. Like the licensed victuallers, it takes for its motto 'Defence not Defiance.' It sacrifices the advantages of a broad flat leaf, and puts up with the discomfort of small pointed narrow ones, because it finds protection against enemies is more important for a shrub which occupies its station in life than expanded feeding-surface. Appetite would naturally lead it to have leaves like a laburnum; necessity compels it to clothe itself instead in short and stubbly prickles. You may regard it, in fact, as a sort of vegetable hedge-hog—a bristling plant-porcupine. Like the mediæval baron in his hill-top stronghold, gorse is more intent upon the problem of defence than upon the gratification of a native love for air and sunshine, food and drink in abundance.

If you look at a gorse-bush in summer or winter, you will observe at once that it is green all over. The short spiky branches are very much the same in colour and texture as the short spiky leaves which grow threateningly out from them. That is to say, the plant makes up for the want of flat and expanded foliage by utilising the branches as subsidiary digestive organs. Every part alike is engaged in drinking in the floating carbonic acid; every part alike is full of green chlorophyll—the active agent of plant digestion. Both in leaves and branches, when the sunlight falls upon them, the process of assimilation goes on uninterruptedly. Thus gorse makes up in the number and intricacy of its busy green spikes for the lack of any large and expanded drinking-surface. To put it briefly, it is mouth and stomach all over.

About its second or third year, the young furze-bush begins to blossom. Apparently, to the unobservant eye of the ordinary townsman, it proceeds to flower thenceforth all the year round without any interruption. In reality, however, it does nothing of the sort. And here I will venture to expound to you why it is that gorse is never out of blossom, and kissing accordingly never out of fashion. The fact is, there are in England two distinct species of furze, superficially indistinguishable to the unlearned eye, but quite well marked when once the difference between them has been pointed out to you. The first is the great or winter gorse, with pale yellow flowers. This is a tall and bushy shrub, very woody at the base, and covered all over with soft down or hair, especially on the bark of the larger branches. It begins to blossom in early autumn, straggles on as best it may through the winter season, puts out fresh masses of bloom on every sunny day in December and January, and continues on through spring or early summer. Indeed, one may see it in the depth of winter with hoar-frost coating its bold yellow blossoms. The second kind is the dwarf or summer gorse—a much smaller plant, less bushy and more creeping; it has fewer hairs and brighter green leaves; its flowers are smaller, of a deeper golden yellow, and it likewise differs in certain technical points about the calyx and bracts which the natural benevolence of my character prevents me from inflicting on unbotanical readers. This smaller species begins to flower in early summer, just about the time when the greater gorse leaves off, and it continues in blossom through July, August, and September, till the greater gorse is ready to start again. The one

plant blooms from October till May, the other takes up the running from May till October.

Thus it comes about that gorse of one kind or another is never out of blossom. Careless observers, not distinguishing between these two allied but distinct species, have come to the conclusion that one and the same plant is perpetually in flower. This is the less to be wondered at as the two often grow together over miles of waste land on heaths and commons. But their effect when in flower is really very different: the great gorse has its pale yellow blossoms scattered irregularly in patches on the round top of the bushes; the dwarf summer gorse, on the other hand, has them arranged in close, upright spikes, very thick and regular. The larger sort makes the more effective masses on a big scale in the landscape; the smaller looks daintier and prettier on a very close view, especially when intermixed, as it often is, with ling and Scotch heather.

Confining ourselves for the present to the great winter gorse, we may notice for ourselves on any heath or common that it is a tall, stout bush, five or six feet in height, and ferociously prickly. By origin, it is entirely a west-European plant, extending from Ireland to central Germany; but it can stand neither extreme heat nor extreme cold; it hardly extends to the highlands of Scotland, and is unknown in Scandinavia—else how should we have that pretty legend of Linnæus? But on the other hand it never reaches the Mediterranean region, where its place is taken by prickly genistas and other southern pea-flowers. Heat bakes it, cold chills it; it loves the intermediate climate of Britain and Belgium. In one word, the greater gorse is a specialised form well adapted to survive on the open and defenceless moors of north-western Europe. For that world it was developed; in that world alone does it thrive and maintain itself. As usual, however, let it defend itself as it may, man has found out a plan to utilise it as fodder for his own purposes. Sheep-farmers burn it down to the ground, when its stems become too high and woody. The plant then sends up green succulent shoots from the uninjured root-stock; and these shoots, though already somewhat coarse and prickly, are eaten by sheep in default of better forage.

As autumn comes on, the great gorse prepares itself for its flowering season. If you examine the boughs in October, you will find them thickly covered with tiny brown buds in all stages of development. Some are just ready to open; others are still in the

first wee pin-head stage of their existence, The plant arranges things so of set purpose. It wishes to flower from time to time through the winter season ; and it graduates its buds so that some will be in a fit state to take advantage of every fine spell in the frostiest weather. Why it should choose this curious time for flowering I will point out a little later ; for the present it will be enough to call attention to the fact that due provision is made beforehand for a long blossoming season. The buds, as I mentioned just now, are brown and velvety ; and the brownness is due to the numerous little hairs with which the two-lipped calyx that encloses the unopened flower is thickly studded. The point of these hairs is to prevent flying insects from laying their eggs on the bud, and encouraging their young grubs to feed on the nutritious little pollen-masses within them. If you look close, indeed, you will see that the hairs cluster thickest at the top, which is just the part where such flying insects always lay their eggs on the buds of defenceless species. As usual, we see the plot and counter-plot of nature. The plant wants the pollen for its own fertilisation. The insect tries to steal it as food for its young. The plant keeps it out by a protective covering.

Till the blossom is ready to unfold on some warm winter day, the two lips of the calyx remain so tightly closed that you can separate them with difficulty. But when the right moment arrives, the bud, which has been waiting for some sunny morning, opens blithely of itself and displays a flower of the common papilionaceous or pea-blossom type. The mode of its fertilisation in the gorse-blossom, however, as in the flower of the broom and some allied bushes, is both curious and interesting. The keel or lower portion of the corolla consists of two united and soldered petals, flanked by what are technically known as the wings. At the base of this keel are two little rounded knobs or projections, one on either side, so shaped as exactly to fit the front legs of the bee as he settles upon the blossom. They afford, in point of fact, a convenient landing-stage, like the step of an omnibus. But the whole lower part of the flower is loosely hinged to the standard or upper portion ; and as the bee alights on it, his weight bends it suddenly down, so that the whole keel bursts open elastically, and dusts him all over with the fertilising pollen. When he flies away again, the keel and wings do not return to their original position, but hang loosely downward. The inquiring bee, on his collecting rounds, can thus see at a glance whether any particular



flower has been 'sprung' or not, as we technically call it. This saves him much time, for he doesn't have to go poking his proboscis into blossoms which may turn out to have been already rifled. It also serves the plant's purpose equally well, as it makes the bee attend strictly to business, instead of fooling about among flowers which have already shed their pollen and already been fertilised. It is a case, in short, of mutual accommodation.

If you depress the keel of a gorse-blossom with your finger, you can see for yourself how it opens elastically and puffs out a little shower of copious yellow pollen. This trick it shares with several other bushy pea-flowers. But the common little English birdsfoot trefoil, a herb of the same family, has invented and patented a still more advanced device which is a distinct improvement upon the method pursued by the brooms and furzes. In birdsfoot trefoil and the group to which it belongs, the keel, instead of being blunt as in gorse, is narrow and sharply-pointed. The stamens shed their pollen beforehand into the tip of this keel. There are a pair of knobs, as before, for the bee to alight upon; but his weight, instead of bursting open the flower with a pop, merely depresses it a little, and pumps out the pollen, which is rather viscid than powdery, against his hairy bosom. The end of the keel is purposely perforated so as to allow the pollen to ooze out under pressure of the insect's body. This is an obvious advance in structure, because it saves and utilises the whole of the pollen, whereas in the case of gorse a considerable portion of that valuable material is wastefully shed abroad to the four winds of heaven. In the single family of the pea-flowers alone, whose blossoms are all constructed on very much the same architectural model, I could tell you of a dozen such minor modifications, each intended in its way to secure more perfect and certain fertilisation. Plants are always inventing fresh Yankee notions.

But why does the greater gorse choose the winter to flower in? Why indulge in so unusual and eccentric an idiosyncrasy? Simply because it finds there is then and there an opening for it. And wherever an opening in life exists, some enterprising person or some enterprising species is sure to step in and avail himself of the vacancy. Bees come out foraging on every sunny day through our English winter. Therefore it is worth while for a few stray flowers to straggle on through the coldest months in order to utilise this off-chance of impregnation. Whenever a morning occurs in winter fit for bees to venture out on, a few hardy gorse-

blossoms venture out to accommodate them. And in early spring, before there is much competition among other plants for the services of those common carriers of pollen, the gorse-bushes are afire with golden blossoms, whose bright petals and heavy scent, hanging thick upon the air, are all intended as so many bids for the kindly attention of the insect fertilisers.

Yet the flower, after all, is only the first stage in the production of the fruit and seed. It exists for no other purpose than to give rise to the germs of future generations. As soon as the blossom is fertilised, the ovary begins to swell out into tiny oblong pods, rather short and thick, but very bean-like in structure. A pod of some sort, indeed, enclosing one or more seeds, like peas or beans, is the universal form of fruit throughout the family of the pea-flowers. In gorse, the seeds number some three or four, and look like miniature kidney-beans. But inasmuch as, like all others of their tribe, they are rich in food-stuffs, the gorse-bush protects them against the attacks of insects by making its pod very thick and hairy. Against browsing animals, they are sufficiently protected by the spinelike branches. When the pods ripen, they have a curious and interesting method of dispersing the seeds. If you walk across a common on a sunny summer day, you may hear every now and then little explosive bangs resounding on every side of you as if from invisible pop-guns. These are the reports of the bursting gorse-pods. The valves are elastic, and the heat of the sun makes them roll up at last with a sudden burst, and scatter the seeds on every side around them. As most of the bushes flower in April, the pods are generally ripe in July or August. This mode of dispersion is not unlike the familiar method employed by the garden balsam. It is a dodge which both plants have hit upon independently.

The dwarf furze resembles in most points its bigger and burlier cousin. Only, it takes up the running when the greater gorse leaves off; it flowers while the other is in fruit, and ripens its pods while the other is flowering. Moreover, it is even more strictly western in type than the greater gorse; it does not cross the Rhine, which forms its scientific frontier, and it goes further north into Scotland than its bigger and less protected companion. Growing lower on the ground, it feels frost less severely. In the matter of fertilisation, it shows no originality, but follows the lead of its big relation. Being a summer plant, however, it does not need to angle for the visits of bees like its wintry friend, but takes

its chance with the Scotch heather and purple ling in whose company it covers square miles of moorland.

There are only these two species of gorse in England. If any man tells you otherwise, assure him that he is a splitter. For modern biologists are divided into the two camps of the splitters and the lumpers. The first are in favour of making a species out of every petty local race or variety; the second are all for lumping unimportant minor forms into a single species. As you may gather from these remarks, I am myself a convinced and consistent lumper. I entertain conscientious objections to splitting. The late Mr. Borrer, who was the most abandoned splitter I have ever met with, endeavoured to make seventeen species out of our English dog-rose, and no less than forty out of our common blackberry-bush. Now a dog-rose, I maintain, is only a dog-rose; and the late Mr. Borrer may argue the matter till he is black in the face before he makes me believe that a common blackberry-bramble is forty distinct and separate brambles. I make these remarks 'without prejudice,' because certain splitters divide the greater gorse into two indistinguishable species, which they describe respectively as common and Irish furze; while they break up the dwarf form into two equally indistinguishable kinds, which they describe under the names of dwarf and Welsh furze respectively. To me, these distinctions appear pretty much as if we were to divide the human race in Britain into two distinct species of blue-eyed and black-eyed. To an eye which is neither black nor blue, but judiciously grey, the two supposed species seem to run into one another everywhere by imperceptible gradations.

On the other hand, I would desire to warn the innocent reader against the opposite error committed by Bentham, who considers that the dwarf furze may be 'perhaps a mere variety' of the greater gorse. This view, in my opinion, errs too much in the contrary direction of excessive lumping. I have therefore, of course, a low opinion of it. But I mention the fact merely in order to point out its exact accordance with a general principle of human nature. You will doubtless have observed that it is precisely this just mean which separates Us—not you and me in particular, but the universal and absolute subjective Us—from the inferior class known as Other People. Other People, you must have observed, rush into such wild excesses; We alone preserve a level head of moderation in all departments of human

thought or action. Other People are either more conservative than We are, in which case they are regular unprogressive old Tories; or else they are more radical than We are, in which case they are downright socialists, revolutionists, and visionary Utopians. We alone occupy down to a shade of shades the precisely right medium position. No matter how far we go in either direction, the people who go further than We, or fall short of Us, are equally in error. They are silly superstitious bigots on the one hand, and wicked materialists or agnostics on the other. They are so very high church, or so very low church, or so very broad church, while we ourselves are 'just right, don't you know,' not yielding in any way to foolish fads and fancies. Therefore the true faith is obviously this—to be neither a ridiculous splitter nor an absurd lump, but to acknowledge the plain fact that there are two kinds of gorse, neither more nor less, in these Isles of Britain. For which true faith, without a shadow of dogmatism, I will go, if need be, to the stake at Smithfield.

## CHARACTER NOTE.

### THE MOTHER.

L'être le plus aimé est celui par qui on aura le plus souffert.

MRS. TASKER lets lodgings. She lives in the most remote and unknown of east coast watering places. Her modest abode is not patronised by the fashionable. She does not even pretend—there is, in fact, no pretence about Mrs. Tasker—that her sitting-room has a sea view. Neither does she deceive the impecunious hospital-nurse, the soft spinster, and the struggling lady artist, who form her *clientèle*, with promises of good cooking or any description of attendance.

Mrs. Tasker, in fact, lets lodgings, as it were, upon sufferance. She receives her guests with a cast of countenance perfectly lugubrious. She has paid no attention to her dress so as to create an agreeable impression upon them. Her normal costume of a dingy skirt, a forlorn top of a different colour, and a depressing apron is unchanged. She is on the alert to tell them at the moment of their arrival all the drawbacks they will find to herself, her rooms, her kitchen-range, and the place in general. 'Your neighbourhood is lovely, I am told,' says the lady artist with the sweetest and most propitiating of smiles.

'I've never seed as it was,' answers Mrs. Tasker gloomily. She hates the lady artist. She regards all lodgers, indeed, with a perfectly consistent animosity. Her disdain for a class of persons who require frequent incidental cups of tea, hot dinners every day, and dessert on Sundays is quite without bounds. Her sentiments towards her guests are written large upon a perfectly plain and trustworthy countenance. When she sees them sitting with their feet upon her cherished Berlin wool-worked arm-chair she bangs their door as she leaves the room with a display of feeling which nearly brings the house about their ears. When one of them ventures to ask if her landlady has such a thing as a pair of nutcrackers, the satiric scorn on Mrs. Tasker's countenance for a woman in the prime of life who cannot crack nuts with her teeth causes the guest to blush and apologise for making so unreasonable a demand.

Mrs. Tasker has, moreover, a habit of thrusting the dinner things on a tray on to the table in front of the visitor with an expression which says more plainly than words, 'If you can't arrange them for yourself, you must be a fool.'

She never panders to the Sybarite inclinations of her lodgers by bringing them hot water in the morning. When they order for dinner a little kickshaw like a mutton-chop, she says with an unmistakable note of triumph in her voice, 'Our butcher's run out of all but pork.'

She always prophesies a continuance of wet weather.

'When it do begin to rain here,' she says, 'it takes precious good care not to stop.'

But in spite of a disposition so wholly honest and discouraging, Mrs. Tasker's lodgers have a habit of coming back to her. Mrs. Tasker is indefatigably clean. She scrubs and polishes until she is purple in the face. She would scorn the idea of purloining a single tartlet belonging to the parlour. She has that vigorous honesty which is often found in company with a bad temper and a good heart.

In the back kitchen live Mr. Tasker and little Johnnie. Mr. Tasker is thick, agricultural, well-meaning, and beery. Mr. Tasker is not of much account, and Johnnie is the apple of Mrs. Tasker's eye. It is for Johnnie she lets lodgings. She and her husband could live well enough—by cutting Tasker off his beer—upon the wages of a day-labourer. But Johnnie wants warm underclothing and a doctor when he is ill, and presently a first-rate schooling. Johnnie must have nourishing food—or what Mrs. Tasker takes to be nourishing food. For his sake, therefore, the mother lets lodgings. For his sake she bears with persons who are always wanting meals and ringing the bell. For his sake she controls—in a measure, at least—a temper as rough as her homely face. For his sake she gets up very early in the morning, and creeps up-stairs to bed, with a sigh she cannot wholly stifle, very late at night. For his sake she gives up what she calls her independence, and which, after Johnnie—a very long way after, indeed—she likes better than anything she has. For Johnnie's sake she does not turn the lady artist summarily out of doors when that enthusiast ruins the parlour table-cloth with her oil paints. For the sake of a little snivelling boy, with a perpetual cold in his head and no pocket-handkerchief, she stints herself and Mr. Tasker in food and clothing and comforts. She performs, indeed,



for him a thousand sacrifices of which no one knows, perhaps, the extent or the difficulty. She is a hundred times a day comparatively polite where her natural disposition inclines her to be superlatively rude. She holds her tongue—at a great cost. She is silently scornful where she wants to be abusive. And she always manages, for Johnnie's sake, to say on parting with her lodgers that she hopes they will return to her next year.

In Mrs. Tasker's love towards the child there is none of that weakness and softness which distinguish some maternities. Her love, in fact, rarely rises to her lips. It is hidden away in a heart wholly strong, honest, and faithful. The utmost demonstration of affection which she permits herself towards her boy is to occasionally rub his damp little nose vigorously with the corner of her apron, leaving that organ astonishingly red and flat. Mrs. Tasker 'don't hold' with spoiling children.

'It's a poor way of caring for 'em,' she says. And so when little Johnnie is naughty she whips him very severely, and when he is good she cuffs him occasionally, just to remind him that the maternal love and wisdom are always watching over him.

At present, and in default of better, Johnnie goes to the village school. Mrs. Tasker neatly describes the schoolmaster as a 'flat.' But would there be any master good enough to teach Johnnie? Perhaps not. He is sent off to school while the lodgers are taking their breakfast. Mrs. Tasker ties him up tightly in a very hygienic and scratchy comforter which she has made with great pains in her rare spare minutes. He is further clad in a thick coat, studded with naval buttons, which Mrs. Tasker bought in place of a jacket for herself.

Mrs. Tasker accompanies him to the gate. She watches him out of sight, and shakes her fist at him when he looks round, by way, as it were, of keeping him up to his duties. It is only when he is quite out of sight that something like a smile and tenderness comes on her harsh face, and she goes slowly back to the house.

'You think a sight on Johnnie, I suppose,' says Mr. Tasker gloomily one day, in a thick voice suggestive of agricultural mud.

'A sight more than I do on you,' answers Mrs. Tasker snappily, washing dishes.

Mrs. Tasker has a feeling which she does not explain, or try to explain, about her love for the child. It appears to her to be something sacred and secret; that one does not want to talk

about; that one resents being reminded of; of which the roots are too deep down in one's heart to bear being dug up and looked at.

She is not, indeed, always actually thinking of him. She has a thousand things to occupy her attention—the lodgers' meals and the parlour tablecloth, and Mr. Tasker's tendency to inebriate himself. But the child stands by, as it were—always very close to her heart.

Everything she does is directly or indirectly for Johnnie. She eyes the clothing of other little boys with a view to copying it for Johnnie. She has quite violent dislikes towards children of Johnnie's age who are fatter and healthier than he is. There are, indeed, many such. But perhaps the maternal affection is only the stronger because Johnnie is puny, weakly, and plain—maternal affection having been so constituted by Nature, or God.

One winter, a winter when Mrs. Tasker's rooms are occupied by a soft-spoken Spinster who has generously sacrificed her youth to a slum, Johnnie is very puny and weakly indeed. The Spinster, who takes an uncommon interest in Johnnie, recommends cod-liver oil. Mr. Tasker, the mother having already denied herself everything except the bare necessities of life, is cut off his beer-money to provide it. And the Spinster thinks this is a very cold place for your dear little boy, and I am just starting a school at Torquay, and won't you trust him to me? And the Spinster kisses Johnnie with great self-sacrifice on the tip of his red and humid little nose. Mrs. Tasker, into whose face a deep colour has come, says in an unusual voice, 'I'll think on it, mum.' That evening, when Johnnie has gone to bed, Mr. Tasker spells out the advertisement of the school from a paper the Spinster has lent him.

Mrs. Tasker sits with a hand on each knee, looking very deeply and fixedly into the fire.

'Ome comfits?' she says doubtfully. 'And what do she mean by 'ome comfits? Will they see as 'is shirt is aired and 'e don't sit in wet boots?'

'Un-lim-i-ted di-et,' continues the father with difficulty.

'If that means letting 'im stuff 'isself, it'll kill that child,' says Mrs. Tasker, pessimistically.

'What are you a-cryin' for?' inquires her husband. Mrs. Tasker replies with considerable snappishness that she is not crying, and men is all fools, drat them, with other remarks so

uncomplimentary to the sex that Mr. Tasker prudently lies low behind the newspaper until the storm is over.

The Spinster's blandishments and her advertisement prevail. Johnnie goes back with her to Torquay. She is paid her fees in advance, from money slowly and hardly saved for the purpose, and mysteriously hidden away in Mrs. Tasker's bedroom. The mother is very courageous before this parting and, it must be confessed, towards Mr. Tasker particularly uncertain in temper. She initiates the Spinster into the mysteries of Johnnie's under-clothing. She buys him six pocket-handkerchiefs, and instructs him how to use them without assistance. She is up very early making his preparations, and goes to bed later than ever at night. She does not spare herself at all. She is glad, perhaps, that she has no time to think. Her hard life at this period ages her very considerably. Or she is aged, perhaps, through some feelings and forebodings of which she never speaks. She is always very cheerful and practical and severe with Johnnie, who is as melancholy at this time as one can be at six years old. 'It's for your good,' she says, shaking him to emphasise her remarks. 'And you ought to know as how it is.' Then the end comes. Johnnie's sad little face is sticky with tears, and toffee which has been administered to him as a consolation, when he puts it up to be kissed. 'Mind you're a good boy,' says the mother unsteadily, and with a grip on his little arm which he understands to mean love, perhaps, better than if it were a delicate caress.

'He is going to be a dear, happy little fellow,' says the Spinster sweetly, and the cab drives away. Two tears—large, heavy, unaccustomed tears—fall down Mrs. Tasker's homely face as she watches it. And then she turns indoors, addressing herself by opprobrious names for her weakness, and cleans out the late lodger's apartments, viciously.

Six months later Mrs. Tasker receives an anonymous letter. It is very illiterate and misspelt. But it is so far comprehensible that when the mother has read it her head falls upon her folded arms on the table, with a great and exceeding bitter cry. Your son, says the letter—spelling the word as if Johnnie were the chief of heavenly bodies—'is being treated that bad as if you don't come and take him away will be the death on him. She is a Beast. She has done the same by others. Only Johnnie is delicater, and it's killing him.'

It's killing him. The fierce maternal heart beating in Mrs.

Tasker's gaunt person makes her tremble in a great passion of rage, love, and yearning. Come and take him away. It sounds so easy, and is impossible. Tasker is out of work—has been out of work for six weeks. The lodgers represent the only source of income. There may be, perhaps, five shillings in the house. But there certainly is not enough for a journey across England. If there were how could Mrs. Tasker leave the house? And what would be the use of sending a lout like Mr. Tasker (men is all fools) who has never been twenty miles from his native village in his life, a complicated cross-railway journey?

So Mrs. Tasker takes the family pen and adds a little water to the remains of the family ink, and writes to the Spinster demanding Johnnie's return. The mother has never held much with book learning. Does not know very well how to write, or at all how to express herself. 'You can keep the money,' she says. 'We don't want that. Send the boy back or we will have the law of you. Send Johnnie back sharp, and curse you, curse you, curse you!'

The curses, which she spells 'cus,' are in some sort a relief to this poor, ignorant, angry, loving soul. The coarse vigour of her ill-spelt abuse comforts her for the moment a little. It is when the letter is sealed, stamped, and posted, that her maternal tragedy begins. It is in those terrible days of waiting, when no answer is returned to the letter and Johnnie does not come home, that she lives through the worst hours of her life.

A most merciful necessity requires that she shall work as usual, that she cook the lodgers' food and clean their rooms, that she shall be perpetually busy from morning until evening. But is there any work that can make her forget Johnnie? It seems to her that his poor, pinched, white little face haunts her. That it comes always between her and what she is doing. She does not say much. What is there to be said? Mr. Tasker smokes a short clay pipe in front of the fire in stolid gloominess. He does not suggest comfort. Suggestions are not his *forte*. He is, in a dull manner, shocked when Mrs. Tasker, for the first time in her life that he can remember, refuses to eat. She pushes away the plate of untouched food and sits for a minute or two with her elbows on the table and her head resting on her hands.

'Don't give in, 'Liza, don't give in,' says Mr. Tasker almost piteously.

'It don't matter,' says Mrs. Tasker. 'I can make up at tea.'

But she does not make up at tea. Who shall say in these

interminable days what terrible, foolish, impossible imaginings creep into her heart? She fancies a thousand ignorant and unlikely things which may be happening to the child.

'He was always weakly,' she says. 'It will kill him.' She has, indeed, hitherto angrily repudiated suggestions that Johnnie is less strong than other children. They recur to her now, and she cannot disbelieve them.

'He were a pore baby, weren't he?' she says, huskily, to her husband, and hoping for a contradiction.

'He were, 'Liza, he were,' answers Mr. Tasker, gloomily.

She remembers, how well! that frail little infancy. She used to compare him with other babies, and insult their mammas dreadfully by vaunting Johnnie's superiority in her rudest and bluntest manner.

'But his legs were pore little sticks,' she murmurs to herself, sorrowfully. 'And I knowed they were all along.'

And one night when she and her husband have been sitting silently on either side of the hearth, watching the embers blacken and die out, her rough, listless hands fall at her sides, and she cries out in despair, and as if she were alone—

'Oh Lord, don't be for hurting our Johnnie any more! We'd sooner he died outright.'

And the next day Johnnie comes. The balmy air of Torquay has not been sufficient to counteract the baneful effects of insufficient food and genteel cruelty. Johnnie is very ill indeed.

'Will he live?' says the mother.

'God help you!' answers the doctor, looking into her strong, homely, haggard face. 'Nothing human can save him.'

But even to this faithless and unbelieving generation there remains one great miracle-worker, whose name is Love.

### AN ELIZABETHAN ZOOLOGIST.

THE student of early works upon natural history, more especially of those that deal with the branch of zoology, will be struck by the fact that our forefathers could boast of a far more curious and varied knowledge of birds, beasts, and fishes, their habits, customs, and medicinal properties, than the cautious, matter-of-fact scientists of the present day. In the middle ages zoological treatises or bestiaries were immensely popular, and no wonder. They formed the veritable fairy-tales of science, the romance of natural history. In those good old days the lion was still generous and magnanimous, morally as well as physically the king of beasts; dragons devastated whole regions with their fiery breath, and the gorgon slew her enemies with a look. The bestiaries proper were imitated by priests and lovers in their religious and love bestiaries. In the former the habits and peculiarities of animals are used to point a moral and adorn a tale. For example, the elephant, as is well known, leans against a tree to take his rest. His enemies cut through the trunk of the tree, and then replace it as before. The next time the elephant comes to take his accustomed rest the tree falls, and so does he, an emblem of our father Adam, who also owed his fall to a tree, though in his case the temptation arose from greediness instead of laziness. In the love bestiaries the despairing lover compares himself to a cricket who takes such delight in chirping that he forgets to eat, and so allows himself to be caught, while he declares that his mistress resembles the cockatrice, whose nature is such that when it finds a man it devours him, and then laments him all the days of its life.

The Elizabethan reading public seem to have had a pronounced taste for natural history. Their curiosity was constantly stimulated and their knowledge increased by marvellous stories brought home from those new countries which every traveller who knew his business managed to discover, and the more strange, the more romantic the tale, the better chance had it of meeting with acceptance and belief. The novelists and playwrights of the period drew their illustrations and similes from the lore of animals, plants, and precious stones, in the well-grounded confidence that these would be understood and appreciated by their readers. In recent times Mr. Buckland and Sir John Lubbock have done their best to popularise the study of natural history, but they could not



hope to rival on his own ground that distinguished Elizabethan zoologist, the Reverend Edward Topsel, author of the 'History of Four-footed Beasts and Serpents.' Mr. Topsel possessed not only learning and research, but also imagination and faith, in which latter qualities our modern scientists are so lamentably deficient. He solemnly affirms the accuracy of all the strange and interesting information that is to be found in his work, acknowledging that the mark of a good writer is to follow truth and not deceivable fables. He revels in anecdotes, however, and in his opinion Pliny and Herodotus are almost as good authorities as Moses. For it need scarcely be said that the reverend gentleman is strictly orthodox in his views; indeed, after stating certain arguments against the theory that the serpent which tempted Eve belonged to the species with women's faces, he settles the matter by concluding: 'Besides, if it had been, Moses would have said so.'

By reason, perhaps, of the many marvellous fables that were in circulation about animals and their little ways, Mr. Topsel is inclined to apologise in his dedicatory letter to the Dean of Westminster for devoting his talents to so frivolous a subject as that of zoology. He argues, however, that a knowledge of beasts and attention to their habits may not be unprofitable to men. 'How great,' he points out, 'is the love and faithfulness of dogs, the meekness of elephants, the modesty and shame-fastness of the adulterous lioness (!), the neatness and politure of the cat and the peacock, the care of the nightingale to make her voice pleasant, the canonical voice of the cock, and, to conclude, the utility of the sheep.'

A glance at Mr. Topsel's account of certain animals which are not to be found in our zoological gardens, and which have been overlooked by nineteenth-century naturalists, may not be without interest even for the sceptical modern reader. He describes several varieties of apes which were quite unknown to Darwin, notably the satyr and the sphinx. Satyrs, he tells us, inhabit the islands of the Satyridæ, which are three in number, standing right over against India (there is a Shakespearian vagueness about his geography). They keep their meat under their chins, and from thence take it forth to eat. They are seldom taken alive, but one was caught in the woods of Saxony—rather a long way from home—which was tamed and taught to talk. There are several different kinds of satyrs, including pans, fauns, and

sileni. The sphinx is a dangerous species of ape, with a woman's face and breasts. If a man first perceive the sphinx he shall be safe, but otherwise it is mortal to man. The pigmies, our author decides, belong to the simian, and not, as some have thought, to the human species, 'because they have no reason, modesty, honesty, nor justice, speak imperfectly, and, above all, have no religion, which (as Plato says) is common to all men.' Mr. Topsel has no great admiration for the ape in any of its varieties, for he holds it to be 'a subtile, ironical, ridiculous, and unprofitable beast, good only for laughter.' There is one use, however, to which he may be put; for when a lion is old or sick he recovers himself by eating an ape. The various organs of the animal, moreover, contain valuable medicinal properties when properly prepared, though they are neglected by our latter-day doctors. Still, it is as well to know that the heart of an ape, dried, and a goat's weight thereof drunk in a draught of stale honey, strengthens the heart, sharpens the understanding, and is sovereign against the falling sickness.

The gulon seems to be a curious and far from attractive animal which was unknown to the ancients, but with which Mr. Topsel and his contemporaries had some slight acquaintance. It was supposed to be a cross between a lion and a hyena, and was called the gulo on account of its gluttonous habits, since it was accustomed to stuff until its body stood out like a bell. 'It may be,' says our author, 'that God hath ordained such a creature in those countries to express the abominable habits of the noblemen who sit from noon till midnight, eating and drinking, particularly in Muscovy and Lithuania. I would to God that this gluttony had been confined to those unchristian or heretical apostatical countries, and had not spread itself over our more civil and Christian parts of the world.'

The gorgon, of which no portrait is given, is proper to Africa, and is a terrible beast, with fiery eyes which look neither forwards nor upwards, but always on the earth. It lives entirely on poisonous herbs, and when it sees an enemy it opens its mouth and sends forth a horrible breath which poisons the air over its head, so that all creatures breathing the air fall into convulsions. It is a vexed question, however, whether the poison proceeds from the creature's throat or eyes, and Mr. Topsel inclines towards the latter supposition, because some of Marius' soldiers, when invading Africa, tried to kill a gorgon which was feeding, but as soon as it raised its head and looked at them they fell down dead.

A marvellous pair of beasts, judging from their portraits and descriptions, are the lamia and the mantichora. The former has hind parts like a goat, forelegs like a bear, face and upper parts like a woman, and is scaled all over like a dragon. They are the swiftest of all earthly beasts, so as none can escape them by running, for by their celerity they compass their prey of beasts, and by their fraud they overthrow men. The mantichora, which is bred among the Indians, must be even more alarming to look upon, for he has a body like a lion, a face like a man, a tail like a scorpion, a voice like a trumpet, and is as swift as a hart. Except that, as might be imagined, it is difficult to catch and tame, but little seems to be known about its habits and customs.

Mr. Topsel is much distressed because he can give us but scanty information about the rhinoceros, which is represented in its portrait clothed in a magnificent suit of plated armour, with a little horn at the back of its neck. 'So strange an outside,' as he remarks, 'yields no doubt an answerable inside and infinite testimonies of worthy and memorable virtues comprised in it.' But the beast is never seen in our country, and he would be unwilling to write anything untrue out of his own invention. However, he compensates himself and his readers for his reticence on the subject of the rhinoceros by launching out into copious details about the unicorn. We should as easily believe, he argues, that there is a unicorn in the world as we do believe that there is an elephant, though not bred in Europe. Besides, the Scripture witnesses that there is such a beast in the 92nd Psalm. He is like a wild ass, with a long horn in the middle of his forehead. He is an untameable beast, and, as we are all aware, an enemy to lions. When a lion sees a unicorn coming along he runs to a tree for succour. Then the unicorn runs against the tree, his horn sticks fast, and the lion comes out and kills him. The unicorn's horn destroys the ill effects of poison if put into water where poison is, and is also a remedy for drunkenness if beaten to a powder and swallowed in a draught of water. Under the circumstances, it seems a pity that only about twenty unicorn's horns are to be found in all Europe. Mr. Topsel has seen one in the treasury of St. Mark's at Venice, and another at the Church of St. Denis, near Paris.

Under the heading of 'Serpents' come the dragon species, of which there are many varieties—flying and crawling, marsh and mountain. It may not be generally known that a dragon is the result of a serpent eating a serpent. The Indian mountain-dragons have precious stones for eyeballs. The Indians catch

them by laying a scarlet garment, whereon is a charm in letters of gold, upon the mouth of the dragon's den, for with red and gold the eyes of the dragon are overcome, and he falleth asleep. Then the Indians kill him and take out the balls of his eyes. When the Phrygian dragons are hungry they turn themselves to the West, and, gaping wide, with the force of their breath do draw the birds that fly over their heads into their throats. If they be not satisfied they hide themselves and fall upon market people and herdsmen, and devour them. But, fortunately, as they feel the heat very much they seldom come out of their holes in the earth. In summer the only cooling drink they can get is the blood of elephants, which is the coldest thing in the whole world. The dragons preserve their health by eating wild lettuce, but it is interesting to learn that apples disagree with them because they have delicate digestions. Mr. Topsel adds testimonies from many good authorities to the fact that flying dragons really exist. Indeed, some had been seen in Germany as lately as the year 1543, and their appearance had been followed by fires and other calamities. 'And I pray to God,' he concludes, 'that we may never have better arguments to satisfy us by his corporal and lively presence in our country, lest some great evil follow there-upon.' Even the dragon, however, is not altogether without its uses, since its fat is a remedy for ulcers, cures squinting, and drives away other venomous beasts.

The cockatrice is called the king of serpents, not for his bigness, but for his stately pace and magnanimous mind. He goes half upright, wears a coronet or comb upon his head, and is supposed to be hatched from a cock's egg. When a cock grows old he lays an egg about the beginning of the dog-days, which, being sat upon by a serpent or toad, the cockatrice presently comes forth. Howbeit, in better experience it is found that the cock doth sit upon his egg himself. 'Galen only among the physicians doubteth that there be a cockatrice, whose authority in this case must not be followed, seeing it was never given to mortal man to know everything, for besides the Holy Scriptures unavoidable authority, there be many grave humane writers affirming not only that there be cockatrices, but also that they infect the air and do kill with their sight.' In Rome in the days of Leo IV. there was a cockatrice found in the vault of a church whose pestiferous breath had infected the air, whereby great mortality followed in Rome, but how the said cockatrice came thither it was never known. Our author is of opinion that it was created and sent of

God for the punishment of the city, 'which I do the more easily believe because Julius Scaliger doth affirm that the said beast was killed by the prayers of Leo IV.' Birds dare not come near the cockatrice, and other serpents avoid it; but the weasel and the cock are its triumphant victors. Hence the custom for travellers through the African deserts to take a cock with them to guard them against the cockatrice or basilisk.

We do not find much to add to our present rather extensive stock of information about the sea-serpent, except the fact that when he grows to large proportions whereby he does harm, the winds or clouds take him up suddenly into the air, and there by violent agitation shake his body to pieces. There is a thrilling representation of a sea-serpent crushing an Elizabethan frigate in its folds, and picking out the alarmed sailors as a boy might pick plums out of a pudding. When Mr. Topsel comes to deal with the hydra, his lively faith for once fails him, and though he gives a portrait of the animal with its seven men's heads surmounted by crowns, he does not vouch for the truth of its existence.

It must not be supposed that our learned zoologist devotes an undue share of his attention to rare and noxious beasts. He dilates at great length upon domestic and useful animals, writing exhaustive practical treatises upon the best methods of breeding, rearing, and doctoring horses, cows, and sheep, while he does not disdain to notice such inferior creatures as the harmless, necessary cat, or what he himself terms the 'little vulgar mouse.'

Indeed, he rises to unwonted heights of eloquence and enthusiasm when he deals with the pet cat and her little ways. Considering the period at which he lived, it is probable that Mr. Topsel was a 'celibate priest,' and the supposition that he cherished a comfortable tabby as the sole companion of his hearth and home seems plausible enough. 'It is needless,' he begins, 'to spend my time about her (the cat's) loving nature to man,' and then, after the manner of authors, he proceeds to enlarge upon this needless theme. 'How she flattereth by rubbing her skin against one's legs, how she whurleth with her voice, having as many tunes as turnes, for she hath one voice to beg and to complain, another to testify her delight and pleasure, another among her own kind by flattering, by hissing, by puffing, and by spitting. Therefore, how she beggeth, playeth, leapeth, looketh, catcheth, tosseth with her foot, riseth up to strings held over her head, sometimes creeping, sometimes lying on her back, sometimes on the belly, snatching now with mouth and anon with

foot, apprehending greedily anything save the hand of man, with divers such gestical actions, it is needless to stand upon.'

Of course, the cat, in common with the mouse, the dragon, the unicorn, and nearly every other animal, contains many medicinal properties. Indeed, it seems probable that the sovereign remedies of the sixteenth century added a fresh terror to ailments and diseases. We all know how, even in these days, the evils of a cold in the head or a toothache are aggravated by the entreaties of our well-meaning friends that we should try a multiplicity of cures, all of which are vouched for as absolutely infallible. But in Elizabethan days far more dismal was the position of the sufferer, thanks to the innumerable loathsome remedies that were compounded of the organs, blood or fat of animals. Gout is bad enough in itself, but how much worse when the patient is condemned to eat 'a fat cat sod'! The toothache is cured by eating a flayed mouse twice a month, and the headache by carrying the head of a mouse in a linen cloth. The sufferer from blindness or sore eyes is ordered to 'take the head of a black cat, without a spot of colour, and burn it to powder in an earthen pot; then take this powder, and through a quill blow it thrice a day into thine eye, and if in the night any heat do thereby annoy thee, take two leaves of an oak wet in cold water and bind them to the eye, and so shall all blindness depart, although it hath oppressed thee for a whole year, and this medicine is approved by many physicians both elder and latter.'

Mr. Topsel has been ably seconded in his labour by the illustrator. As works of art the wood-cuts are admirable, though in the case of the less known animals, such as the hippopotamus and the crocodile, the portraits are not always very recognisable. It is evident that the artist has carefully read the descriptions in the letterpress, and then set to work with the firm determination to reproduce all the most salient features of each curious beast. But his imagination is apt to run away with him, and his creations are sometimes distinguished by a weirdness which is almost worthy of Albert Dürer. His portraits of domestic and indigenous animals are, however, painfully like, with a slight leaning towards caricature. This, it must be remembered, was a very general tendency in early art, the next step to the naïve style in which it was necessary to label the figures 'This is a man,' or 'This is a cow,' being representations of persons and things which, if not as large as life, were at least twice as natural.



## WITH EDGED TOOLS.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

## AN ENVOY.

What we love perfectly  
 For its own sake we love. . . .  
 . . . That which is best for it is best for us.

'FEEL like gettin' up to breakfast, do you, sir?' said Joseph to his master a few days later. 'Well, I am glad. Glad ain't quite the word, though!'

And he proceeded to perform the duties attendant on his master's wardrobe with a wise, deep-seated shake of the head. While setting the shaving necessities in order on the dressing-table, he went further—he winked gravely at himself in the looking-glass.

'You've made wonderful progress the last few days, sir,' he remarked. 'I always told Missis Marie that it would do you a lot of good to have Mr. Gordon to heart you up with his cheery ways—and Miss Gordon too, sir.'

'Yes, but they would not have been much good without all your care before they came. I had turned the corner a week ago—I felt it myself.'

Joseph grinned—an honest, open grin of self-satisfaction. He was not one of those persons who like their praise bestowed with subtlety.

'Wonderful!' he repeated to himself as he went to the well in the garden for his master's bath-water. 'Wonderful! but I don't understand things—not bein' a marryin' man.'

During the last few days Jack's progress had been rapid enough even to satisfy Joseph. The doctor expressed himself fully reassured, and even spoke of returning no more. But he repeated his wish that Jack should leave for England without delay.

'He is quite strong enough to be moved now,' he finished by saying. 'There is no reason for further delay.'

'No,' answered Jocelyn, to whom the order was spoken. 'No—none. We will see that he goes by the next boat.'

The doctor paused. He was a young man who took a strong—perhaps too strong a personal interest in his patients. Jocelyn had walked with him as far as the gate, with only a parasol to protect her from the evening sun. They were old friends. The doctor's wife was one of Jocelyn's closest friends on the Coast.

'Do you know anything about Meredith's future movements?' he asked. 'Does he intend to come out here again?'

'I could not tell you. I do not think they have settled yet. But I think that when he gets home he will probably stay there.'

'Best thing he can do—best thing he can do. It will never do for him to risk getting another taste of malaria—tell him so, will you? Good-bye.'

'Yes, I will tell him.'

And Jocelyn Gordon walked slowly back to tell the man she loved that he must go away from her and never come back. The last few days had been days of complete happiness. There is no doubt that women have the power of enjoying the present to a greater degree than men. They can live in the bliss of the present moment with eyes continually averted from the curtain of the near future which falls across that bliss and cuts it off. Men allow the presence of the curtain to mar the present brightness.

These days had been happier for Jocelyn than for Jack, because she was conscious of the fulness of every moment, while he was merely rejoicing in comfort after hardship, in pleasant society after loneliness. Even with the knowledge that it could not last, that beyond the near future lay a whole lifetime of complete solitude and that greatest of all miseries, the desire of an obvious impossibility—even with this she was happier than he; because she loved him and she saw him daily getting stronger; because their relative positions brought out the best and the least romantic part of a woman's love—the subtle maternity of it. There is a fine romance in carrying our lady's kerchief in an inner pocket, but there is something higher and greater and much more durable in the darning of a sock; for within the handkerchief there is chiefly gratified vanity, while within the sock there is one of those small infantile boots which have but little meaning for us.

Jocelyn entered the drawing-room with a smile.

'He is very pleased,' she said. 'He does not seem to want to see you any more, and he told me to be inhospitable.'

'As how?'

He told me to turn you out. You are to leave by the next steamer.'

He felt a sudden unaccountable pang of disappointment at her smiling eyes.

'This is no joking matter,' he said half seriously. 'Am I really as well as that?'

'Yes.'

'The worst of it is that you seem rather pleased.'

'I am—at the thought that you are so much better.' She paused and turned quite away, busying herself with a pile of books and magazines. 'The other,' she went on too indifferently, 'was unfortunately to be foreseen. It is the necessary drawback.'

He rose suddenly and walked to the window.

'The grim old necessary drawback,' he said, without looking towards her.

There was a silence of some duration. Neither of them seemed to be able to find a method of breaking it without awkwardness. It was she who spoke at last.

'He also said,' she observed in a practical way, 'that you must not come out to Africa again.'

He turned as if he had been stung.

'Did he make use of that particular word?' he asked.

'Which particular word?'

'Must.'

Jocelyn had not foreseen the possibility that the doctor was merely repeating to her what he had told Jack on a previous visit.

'No,' she answered. 'I think he said "better not."'

'And you make it into "must."'

She laughed, with a sudden light-heartedness which remained unexplained.

'Because I know you both,' she answered. 'For him "better not" stands for "must." With you "better not" means "doesn't matter."'

'"Better not" is so weak that if one pits duty against it it collapses. I cannot leave Oscar in the lurch, especially after his prompt action in coming to my relief.'

'Yes,' she replied guardedly. 'I like Mr. Oscar's way of doing things.'

The matter of the telegram summoning Oscar had not yet been explained. She did not want to explain it at that moment; indeed, she hoped that the explanation would never be needed.

'However,' she added, 'you will see when you get home.'

He laughed.

'The least pleasant part of it is,' he said, 'your evident desire to see the last of me. Could you not disguise that a little—just for the sake of my feelings?'

'Book your passage by the next boat and I will promptly descend to the lowest depths of despair,' she replied lightly.

He shrugged his shoulders with a short laugh.

'This is hospitality indeed,' he said, moving towards the door. Then suddenly he turned and looked at her gravely.

'I wonder,' he said slowly, 'if you are doing this for a purpose. You said that you met my father——'

'Your father is not the man to ask anyone's assistance in his own domestic affairs, and anything I attempted to do could only be looked upon as the most unwarrantable interference.'

'Yes,' said Meredith seriously. 'I beg your pardon. You are right.'

He went to his own room and summoned Joseph.

'When is the next boat home?' he asked.

'Boat on Thursday, sir.'

Meredith nodded. After a little pause he pointed to a chair.

'Just sit down,' he said. 'I want to talk over this Simiacine business with you.'

Joseph squared his shoulders, and sat down with a face indicative of the gravest attention. Sitting thus he was no longer a servant, but a partner in the Simiacine. He even indulged in a sidelong jerk of the head, as if requesting the attention of some absent friend in a humble sphere of life to this glorious state of affairs.

'You know,' said Meredith, 'Mr. Durnovo is more or less a blackguard.'

Joseph drew in his feet, having previously drawn his trousers up at the knees.

'Yes, sir,' he said, glancing up. 'A blackguard—a damned blackguard,' he added unofficially under his breath.

'He wants continual watching and a special treatment. He requires someone constantly at his heels.'

'Yes, sir,' admitted Joseph with some fervour.

'Now I am ordered home by the doctor,' went on Meredith. 'I must go by the next boat, but I don't like to go and leave Mr. Osgard in the lurch, with no one to fall back upon but Durnovo—you understand.'

Joseph's face had assumed the habitual look of servitude—he was no longer a partner, but a mere retainer, with a half-comic resignation in his eyes.

'Yes, sir,' scratching the back of his neck. 'I am afraid I understand. You want me to go back to that Platter—that God-forsaken Platter, as I may say.'

'Yes,' said Meredith. 'That is about it. I would go myself—'

'God bless you! I know you would!' burst in Joseph. 'You'd go like winkin'. There's no one knows that better nor me, sir; and what I says is—like master, like man. Game, sir—game it is! I'll go. I'm not the man to turn my back on a pal—a—a partner, sir, so to speak.'

'You see,' said Meredith, with the deep insight into men that made command so easy to him—'you see there is no one else. There is not another man in Africa who could do it.'

'That's true, sir.'

'And I think that Mr. Osgard will be looking for you.'

'And he won't need to look long, sir. But I should like to see you safe on board the boat, then I'm ready to go.'

'Right. We can both leave by Thursday's boat, and we'll get the captain to drop you and your men at Lopez. We can get things ready by then, I think.'

'Easy, sir.'

The question thus settled, there seemed to be no necessity to prolong the interview. But Joseph did not move. Meredith waited patiently.

'I'll go up, sir, to the Platter,' said the servant at length, 'and I'll place myself under Mr. Osgard's orders; but before I go I want to give you notice of resignation. I resigns my partnership in this 'ere Simiacine at six months from to-day. It's a bit too hot, sir, that's the truth. It's all very well for gentlemen like yourself and Mr. Osgard, with fortunes and fine houses, and, as sayin' goes, a wife apiece waiting for you at home—it's all very well for you to go about in this blamed country, with yer life in yer hand, and not a tight grip at that. But for a poor soldier man like myself, what has smelt the regulation powder all 'is life, and hasn't got

nothing to love and no gal waiting for him at home—well, it isn't good enough. That's what I say, sir, with respects.'

He added the last two words by way of apology for having banged a very solid fist on the table.

Meredith smiled.

'So you've had enough of it?' he said.

'Enough ain't quite the word, sir. Why, I'm wore to a shadow with the trouble and anxiety of getting you down here.'

'Fairly substantial shadow,' commented Meredith.

'May be, sir. But I've had enough of money-makin'. It's too dear at the price. And if you'll let an old servant speak his mind it ain't fit for you, this 'ere kind of work. It's good enough for black-scum and for chocolate-birds like Durnovo; but this country's not built for honest white men—least of all for born and bred gentlemen.'

'Yes—that's all very well in theory, Joseph, and I'm much obliged to you for thinking of me. But you must remember that we live in an age where money sanctifies everything. Your hands can't get dirty if there is money inside them.'

Joseph laughed aloud.

'Ah, that's your way of speaking, sir, that's all. And I'm glad to hear it. You have not spoken like that for two months and more.'

'No—it is only my experience of the world.'

'Well, sir, talkin' of experience, I've had about enough, as I tell you, and I beg to place my resignation in your hands. I shall do the same by Mr. Oscard if I reach that Platter, God willin', as the sayin' is.'

'All right, Joseph.'

Still there was something left to say. Joseph paused and scratched the back of his neck pensively with one finger.

'Will you be writin' to Mr. Oscard, sir, for me to take?'

'Yes.'

'Then I should be obliged if you would mention the fact that I would rather not be left alone with that blackguard Durnovo, either up at the Platter or travelling down. That man's got on my nerves, sir; and I'm mortal afraid of doing him a injury. He's got a long neck—you've noticed that, perhaps. There was a little Gourkha man up in Cabul taught me a trick—it's as easy as killing a chicken—but you want a man wi' a long neck—just such a neck as Durnovo's.'



'But what harm has the man done you,' asked Meredith, 'that you think so affectionately of his neck?'

'No harm, sir; but we're just like two cats on a wall, watchin' each other and hating each other like blue poison. There's more villany at that man's back than you think for—mark my words.'

Joseph moved away towards the door.

'Do you *know* anything about him—anything shady?' cried Meredith after him.

'No, sir. I don't *know* anything. But I suspects a whole box full. One of these days I'll find him out, and if I catch him fair there'll be a rough and tumble. It'll be a pretty fight, sir, for them that's sittin' in the front row.'

Joseph rubbed his hands slowly together and departed, leaving his master to begin a long letter to Guy Oscar.

And at the other end of the passage, in her room with the door locked, Jocelyn Gordon was sobbing in a wild burst of grief, because she had probably saved the life of Jack Meredith, and in doing so had only succeeded in sending him away from her.

---

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### DARK DEALING.

Only an honest man doing his duty.

WHEN Jack Meredith said that there was not another man in Africa who could make his way from Loango to the Simiacine Plateau he spoke no more than the truth. There were only four men in all the world who knew the way, and two of them were isolated on the summit of a lost mountain in the interior. Meredith himself was unfit for the journey. There remained Joseph.

True, there were several natives who had made the journey, but they were as dumb and driven animals, fighting as they were told, carrying what they were given to carry, walking as many miles as they were considered able to walk. They hired themselves out like animals, and as the beasts of the field they did their work—patiently, without intelligence. Half of them did not know where they were going—what they were doing; the other half did not care. So much work, so much wage, was their terse

creed. They neither noted their surroundings nor measured distance. At the end of their journey they settled down to a life of ease and leisure, which was to last until necessity drove them to work again. Such is the African. Many of them came from distant countries, a few were Zanzibaris, and went home made men.

If any doubt the inability of such men to steer a course through the wood, let him remember that three months' growth in an African forest will obliterate the track left by the passage of an army. If any hold that men are not created so dense and unambitious as has just been represented, let him look nearer home in our own merchant service. The able-bodied seaman goes to sea all his life, but he never gets any nearer navigating the ship—and he a white man.

In coming down to Loango Joseph had had the recently-made track of Oscar's rescuing party to guide him day by day. He knew that this was now completely overgrown. The Simiacine Plateau was once more lost to all human knowledge.

And up there—alone amidst the clouds—Guy Oscar was, as he himself tersely put it, 'sticking to it.' He had stuck to it to such good effect that the supply of fresh young Simiacine was daily increasing in bulk. Again, Victor Durnovo seemed to have regained his better self. He was like a full-blooded horse—tractable enough if kept hard at work. He was a different man up on the Plateau to what he was down at Loango. There are some men who deteriorate in the wilds, while others are better, stronger, finer creatures away from the luxury of civilisation and the softening influence of female society. Of these latter was Victor Durnovo.

Of one thing Guy Oscar soon became aware, namely, that no one could make the men work as could Durnovo. He had merely to walk to the door of his tent to make every picker on the little plateau bend over his tree with renewed attention. And while above all was eagerness and hurry, below, in the valley, this man's name insured peace.

The trees were now beginning to show the good result of pruning and a regular irrigation. Never had the leaves been so vigorous, never had the Simiacine trees borne such a bushy, luxuriant growth since the dim dark days of the Flood.

Oscar relapsed into his old hunting ways. Day after day he tranquilly shouldered his rifle, and alone, or followed by one

attendant only, he disappeared into the forest, only to emerge therefrom at sunset. What he saw there he never spoke of. Sure it was that he must have seen strange things, for no prying white man had set foot in these wilds before him; no book has ever been written of that country that lies around the Simiacine Plateau.

He was not the man to worry himself over uncertainties. He had an enormous faith in the natural toughness of an Englishman, and while he crawled breathlessly in the track of the forest monsters he hardly gave a thought to Jack Meredith. Meredith, he argued to himself, had always risen to the occasion: why should he not rise to this? He was not the sort of man to die from want of staying power, which, after all, is the cause of more deaths than we dream of. And when he had recovered he would either return or send back Joseph with a letter containing those suggestions of his which were really orders.

Of Millicent Chyne he thought more often, with a certain tranquil sense of a good time to come. In her also he placed a perfect faith. A poet has found out that, if one places faith in a man, it is probable that the man will rise to trustworthiness—of woman he says nothing. But of these things Guy Oscar knew little. He went his own tranquilly strong way, content to buy his own experience.

He was thinking of Millicent Chyne one misty morning while he walked slowly backwards and forwards before his tent. His knowledge of the country told him that the mist was nothing but the night's accumulation of moisture round the summit of the mountain—that down in the valleys it was clear, and that half an hour's sunshine would disperse all. He was waiting for this result when he heard a rifle-shot far away in the haze beneath him; and he knew that it was Joseph—probably making one of those marvellous long shots of his which roused a sudden sigh of envy in the heart of this mighty hunter whenever he witnessed them.

Oscar immediately went to his tent and came out with his short-barrelled, evil-looking rifle on his arm. He fired both barrels in quick succession and waited, standing gravely on the edge of the Plateau. After a short silence two answering reports rose up through the mist to his straining ears.

He turned and found Victor Durnovo standing at his side.

'What is that?' asked the half-breed.

'It must be Joseph,' answered Guy, 'or Meredith. It can be nobody else.'

'Let us hope that it is Meredith,' said Durnovo with a forced laugh, 'but I doubt it.'

Oscard looked down in his sallow, powerful face. He was not quick at such things, but at that moment he felt strangely certain that Victor Durnovo was hoping that Meredith was dead.

'I hope it isn't,' he answered, and without another word he strode away down the little pathway from the summit into the clouds, loading his rifle as he went.

Durnovo and his men, working among the Simiacine bushes, heard from time to time a signal shot as the two Englishmen groped their way towards each other through the everlasting night of the African forest.

It was midday before the new-comers were espied making their way painfully up the slope, and Joseph's welcome was not so much in Durnovo's handshake, in Guy Oscard's silent approval, as in the row of grinning, good-natured black faces behind Durnovo's back.

That night laughter was heard in the men's camp for the first time for many weeks—nay, several months. According to the account that Joseph gave to his dusky admirers, he had been on terms of the closest familiarity with the wives and families of all who had such at Loango or on the Coast. He knew the mother of one, had met the sweetheart of another, and confessed that it was only due to the fact that he was not 'a marryin' man' that he had not stayed at Loango for the rest of his life. It was somewhat singular that he had nothing but good news to give.

Durnovo heard the clatter of tongues, and Guy Oscard, smoking his contemplative pipe in a camp-chair before his hut door, noticed that the sound did not seem very welcome.

Joseph's arrival with ten new men seemed to give a fresh zest to the work, and the carefully packed cases of Simiacine began to fill Oscard's tent to some inconvenience. Thus things went on for two tranquil weeks.

'First,' Oscard had said, 'let us get the crop in, and then we can arrange what is to be done about the future.'

So the crop received due attention; but the two leaders of the men—he who led by fear and he who commanded by love—were watching each other.

One evening, when the work was done, Oscard's meditations were disturbed by the sound of angry voices behind the native

camp. He turned naturally towards Durnovo's tent, and saw that he was absent. The voices rose and fell; there was a singular accompanying roar of sound which Osgard never remembered having heard before. It was the protesting voice of a mass of men—and there is no sound like it—none so disquieting. Osgard listened attentively, and suddenly he was thrown up on his feet by a pistol-shot.

At the same moment Joseph emerged from behind the tents, dragging someone by the collar. The victim of Joseph's violence was off his feet, but still struggling and kicking.

Guy Osgard saw the flash of a second shot, apparently within a few inches of Joseph's face; but he came on, dragging the man with him, whom from his clothing Osgard saw to be Durnovo.

Joseph was spitting out wadding and burnt powder.

'Shoot *me*, would yer—yer damned skulking chocolate-bird? I'll teach you! I'll twist that brown neck of yours.'

He shook him as a terrier shakes a rat, and seemed to shake things off him—among others a revolver which described a circle in the air, and fell heavily on the ground, where the concussion discharged a cartridge.

'Ere, sir,' cried Joseph, literally throwing Durnovo down on the ground at Osgard's feet, 'that man has just shot one o' them poor niggers, so 'elp me God!'

Durnovo rose slowly to his feet, as if the shaking had disturbed his faculties.

'And the man hadn't done 'im no harm at all. He's got a grudge against him. I've seen that this last week and more. It's a man as was kinder fond o' me, and we understood each other's lingo. That's it—he was afraid of my 'earing things that mightn't be wholesome for me to know. The man hadn't done no harm. And Durnovo comes up and begins abusing 'im, and then he strikes 'im, and then he out with his revolver and shoots 'im down.'

Durnovo gave an ugly laugh. He had readjusted his disordered dress and was brushing the dirt from his knees.

'Oh, don't make a fool of yourself,' he said in a hissing voice; 'you don't understand these natives at all. The man raised his hand to me. He would have killed me if he had had the chance. Shooting was the only thing left to do. You can only hold these men by fear. They expect it.'

'Of course they expect it,' shouted Joseph in his face; 'of course they expect it, Mr. Durnovo.'

'Why?'

'Because they're *slaves*. Think I don't know that?'

He turned to Oscar.

'This man, Mr. Oscar,' he said, 'is a slave-owner. Them forty that joined at Msala was slaves. He's shot two of 'em now: this is his second. And what does he care?—they're his slaves. Oh! shame on yer!' turning again to Durnovo; 'I wonder God lets yer stand there. I can only think that He doesn't want to dirty His hand by strikin' yer down.'

Oscar had taken his pipe from his lips. He looked bigger, somehow, than ever. His brown face was turning to an ashen colour, and there was a dull, steel-like gleam in his blue eyes. The terrible, slow-kindling anger of this Northerner made Durnovo catch his breath. It was so different from the sudden passion of his own countrymen.

'Is this true?' he asked.

'It's a lie, of course,' answered Durnovo with a shrug of the shoulders. He moved away as if he were going to his tent, but Oscar's arm reached out. His large brown hand fell heavily on the half-breed's shoulder.

'Stay,' he said; 'we are going to get to the bottom of this.'

'Good,' muttered Joseph, rubbing his hands slowly together; 'this is prime.'

'Go on,' said Oscar to him.

'Where's the wages you and Mr. Meredith has paid him for those forty men?' pursued Joseph. 'Where's the advance you made him for those men at Msala? Not one ha'penny of it have they fingered. And why? Cos they're slaves! Fifteen months at fifty pounds—let them as can reckon tot it up for themselves. That's his first swindle—and there's others, sir! Oh, there's more behind. That man's just a stinkin' hot-bed o' crime. But this 'ere slave-owning is enough to settle his hash, I take it.'

'Let us have these men here—we will hear what they have to say,' said Oscar, in the same dull tone that frightened Victor Durnovo.

'Not you!' he went on, laying his hand on Durnovo's shoulder again; 'Joseph will fetch them, thank you.'

So the forty—or the thirty-seven survivors, for one had died on the journey up and two had been murdered—were brought.



They were peaceful, timorous men, whose manhood seemed to have been crushed out of them; and slowly, word by word, their grim story was got out of them. Joseph knew a little of their language, and one of the head fighting men knew a little more, and spoke a dialect known to Oscar. They were slaves they said at once, but only on Oscar's promise that Durnovo should not be allowed to shoot them. They had been brought from the north by a victorious chief who in turn had handed them over to Victor Durnovo in payment of an outstanding debt for ammunition supplied.

The great African moon rose into the heavens and shone her yellow light upon this group of men. Overhead all was peace: on earth there was no peace. And yet it was one of Heaven's laws that Victor Durnovo had broken.

Guy Oscar went patiently through to the end of it. He found out all that there was to find; and he found out something which surprised him. No one seemed to be horror-struck. The free men stood stolidly looking on, as did the slaves. And this was Africa—the heart of Africa, where, as Victor Durnovo said, no one knows what is going on. Oscar knew that he could apply no law to Victor Durnovo except the great law of humanity. There was nothing to be done; for one individual may not execute the laws of humanity. All were assembled before him—the whole of the great Simiacine Expedition except the leader, whose influence lay over one and all only second to his presence.

'I leave this place at sunrise to-morrow,' said Guy Oscar to them all. 'I never want to see it again. I will not touch one penny of the money that has been made. I speak for Mr. Meredith and myself—'

'Likewise me—damn it!' put in Joseph.

'I speak as Mr. Meredith himself would have spoken. There is the Simiacine—you can have it. I won't touch it. And now who is going with me—who leaves with me to-morrow morning?'

He moved away from Durnovo.

'And who stays with me?' cried the half-breed, 'to share and share alike in the Simiacine?'

Joseph followed Oscar, and with him a certain number of the blacks, but some stayed. Some went over to Durnovo and stood beside him. The slaves spoke among themselves, and then they all went over to Durnovo.

So that which the placid moon shone down upon was the

break-up of the great Simiacine scheme. Victor Durnovo had not come off so badly. He had the larger half of the men by his side. He had all the finest crop the trees had yet yielded—but he had yet to reckon with high Heaven.

---

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### AMONG THORNS.

We shut our hearts up nowadays,  
Like some old music-box that plays  
Unfashionable airs.

SIR JOHN MEREDITH was sitting stiffly in a straight-backed chair by his library fire. In his young days men did not loll in deep chairs, with their knees higher than their heads. There were no such chairs in this library, just as there was no afternoon tea except for ladies. Sir John Meredith was distressed to observe a great many signs of the degeneration of manhood, which he attributed to the indulgence in afternoon tea. Sir John had lately noticed another degeneration, namely, in the quality of the London gas. So serious was this falling off that he had taken to a lamp in the evening, which lamp stood on the table at his elbow.

Some months earlier—that is to say, about six months after Jack's departure—Sir John had called casually upon an optician. He stood upright by the counter, and frowned down on a mild-looking man who wore the strongest spectacles made, as if in advertisement of his own wares.

'They tell me,' he said, 'that you opticians make glasses now which are calculated to save the sight in old age.'

'Yes, sir,' replied the optician, with wriggling white fingers. 'We make a special study of that. We endeavour to save the sight—to store it up, as it were, in—a middle life, for use in old age. You see, sir, the pupil of the eye——'

Sir John held up a warning hand.

'The pupil of the eye is your business, as I understand from the sign above your shop—at all events, it is not mine,' he said. 'Just give me some glasses to suit my sight, and don't worry me with the pupil of the eye.'

He turned towards the door, threw back his shoulders, and waited.

'Spectacles, sir?' inquired the man meekly.

'Spectacles, sir,' cried Sir John. 'No, sir. Spectacles be damned. I want a pair of eyeglasses.'

And these eyeglasses were affixed to the bridge of Sir John Meredith's nose, as he sat rather stiffly in the straight-backed chair.

He was reading a scientific book which society had been pleased to read, mark, and learn, without inwardly digesting, as is the way of society with books. Sir John read a good deal—he had read more lately, perhaps, since entertainments and evening parties had fallen off so lamentably—and he made a point of keeping up with the mental progress of the age.

His eyebrows were drawn down, as if the process of storing up eyesight for his old age was somewhat laborious. At times he turned and glanced over his shoulder impatiently at the lamp.

The room was very still in its solid, old-fashioned luxury. Although it was June a small wood fire burned in the grate, and the hiss of a piece of damp bark was the only sound within the four walls. From without, through the thick curtains, came at intervals the rumble of distant wheels. But it was just between times, and the fashionable world was at its dinner. Sir John had finished his, not because he dined earlier than the rest of the world—he could not have done that—but because a man dining by himself, with a butler and a footman to wait upon him, does not take very long over his meals.

He was in full evening dress, of course, built up by his tailor, bewigged, perfumed, and cunningly aided by toilet-table deceptions.

At times his weary old eyes wandered from the printed page to the smouldering fire, where a whole volume seemed to be written—it took so long to read. Then he would pull himself together, glance at the lamp, readjust the eyeglasses, and plunge resolutely into the book. He did not always read scientific books. He had a taste for travel and adventure—the Arctic regions, Asia, Siberia, and Africa—but Africa was all locked away in a lower drawer of the writing-table. He did not care for the servants to meddle with his books, he told himself. He did not tell anybody that he did not care to let the servants see him reading his books of travel in Africa.

There was nothing dismal or lonely about this old man, sitting in evening dress in a high-backed chair, stiffly reading a scientific

book of the modern, cheap science tenor—not written for scientists, but to step in when the brain is weary of novels and afraid of communing with itself. Oh, no! A gentleman need never be dull. He has his necessary occupations. If he is a man of intellect he need never be idle. It is an occupation to keep up with the times.

Sometimes after dinner, while drinking his perfectly-made black coffee, Sir John would idly turn over the invitation cards on the mantelpiece—the carriage was always in readiness—but of late the invitations had not proved very tempting. There was no doubt that society was not what it used to be. The summer was not what it used to be, either. The evenings were so soundly cold. So he often stayed at home and read a book.

He paused in the midst of a scientific definition, and looked up with listening eyes. He had got into the way of listening to the passing wheels. Lady Cantourne sometimes called for him on her way to a festivity, but it was not that.

The wheels he heard had stopped—perhaps it was Lady Cantourne. But he did not think so. She drove behind a pair, and this was not a pair. It was wonderful how well he could detect the difference, considering the age of his ears.

A few minutes later the butler silently threw open the door, and Jack stood in the threshold. Sir John Meredith's son had been given back to him from the gates of death.

The son, like the father, was in immaculate evening dress. There was a very subtle cynicism in the thought of turning aside on such a return as this to dress—to tie a careful white tie and brush imperceptibly ruffled hair.

There was a little pause, and the two tall men stood, half-bowing with a marvellous similarity of attitude, gazing steadily into each other's eyes. And one cannot help wondering whether it was a mere accident that Jack Meredith stood motionless on the threshold until his father said :

'Come in.'

'Thomson,' he continued to the butler, with that pride of keeping up before all the world which was his, 'bring up coffee. You will take coffee?' to his son while they shook hands.

'Thanks, yes.'

The butler closed the door behind him. Sir John was holding on to the back of his high chair in rather a constrained way—almost as if he were suffering pain. They looked at each other

again, and there was a resemblance in the very manner of raising the eyelid. There was a stronger resemblance in the grim, waiting silence which neither of them would break.

At last Jack spoke, approaching the fire and looking into it.

'You must excuse my taking you by surprise at this—unusual hour.' He turned; saw the lamp, the book, and the eyeglasses—more especially the eyeglasses, which seemed to break the train of his thoughts. 'I only landed at Liverpool this afternoon,' he went on with hopeless politeness. 'I did not trouble you with a telegram, knowing that you object to them.'

The old man bowed gravely.

'I am always glad to see you,' he said suavely. 'Will you not sit down?'

And they had begun wrong. It is probable that neither of them had intended this. Both had probably dreamed of a very different meeting. But both alike had counted without that stubborn pride which will rise up at the wrong time and in the wrong place—the pride which Jack Meredith had inherited by blood and teaching from his father.

'I suppose you have dined,' said Sir John, when they were seated, 'or may I offer you something?'

'Thanks, I dined on the way up—in a twilight refreshment room, with one waiter and a number of attendant black-beetles.'

Things were going worse and worse.

Sir John smiled, and he was still smiling when the man brought in coffee.

'Yes,' he said conversationally, 'for speed combined with discomfort I suppose we can hold up heads against any country. Seeing that you are dressed, I supposed that you had dined in town.'

'No. I drove straight to my rooms, and kept the cab while I dressed.'

What an important matter this dressing seemed to be! And there were fifteen months behind it—fifteen months which had aged one of them and sobered the other.

Jack was sitting forward in his chair with his immaculate dress-shoes on the fender—his knees apart, his elbows resting on them, his eyes still fixed on the fire. Sir John looked keenly at him beneath his frowning, lashless lids. He saw the few grey hairs over Jack's ears, the suggested wrinkles, the drawn lines about his mouth.

'You have been ill?' he said.

Joseph's letter was locked away in the top drawer of his writing-table.

'Yes, I had rather a bad time—a serious illness. My man nursed me through it, however, with marked success; and—the Gordons, with whom I was staying, were very kind.'

'I had the pleasure of meeting Miss Gordon.'

Jack's face was steady—suavely impenetrable.

Sir John moved a little, and set his empty cup upon the table.

'A charming girl,' he added.

'Yes.'

There was a little pause.

'You are fortunate in that man of yours,' Sir John said. 'A first-class man.'

'Yes—he saved my life.'

Sir John blinked, and for the first time his fingers went to his mouth, as if his lips had suddenly got beyond his control.

'If I may suggest it,' he said rather indistinctly, 'I think it would be well if we signified our appreciation of his devotion in some substantial way. We might well do something between us.'

He paused and threw back his shoulders.

'I should like to give him some substantial token of my—gratitude.'

Sir John was nothing if not just.

'Thank you,' answered Jack quietly. He turned his head a little, and glanced, not at his father, but in his direction. 'He will appreciate it, I know.'

'I should like to see him to-morrow.'

Jack winced, as if he had made a mistake.

'He is not in England,' he explained. 'I left him behind me in Africa. He has gone back to the Simiacine Plateau.'

The old man's face dropped rather piteously.

'I am sorry,' he said, with one of the sudden relapses into old age that Lady Cantourne dreaded. 'I may not have a chance of seeing him to thank him personally. A good servant is so rare nowadays. These modern democrats seem to think that it is a nobler thing to be a bad servant than a good one. As if we were not all servants!'

He was thirsting for details. There were a thousand questions in his heart, but not one on his lips.



'Will you have the kindness to remember my desire,' he went on suavely, 'when you are settling up with your man?'

'Thank you,' replied Jack, 'I am much obliged to you.'

'And in the meantime, as you are without a servant, you may as well make use of mine. One of my men—Henry—who is too stupid to get into mischief—a great recommendation by the way—understands his business. I will ring and have him sent over to your rooms at once.'

He did so, and they sat in silence until the butler had come and gone.

'We have been very successful with the Simiacine—our scheme,' said Jack suddenly.

'Ah!'

'I have brought home a consignment valued at seventy thousand pounds.'

Sir John's face never changed.

'And,' he asked with veiled sarcasm, 'do you carry out the—er—commercial part of the scheme?'

'I shall begin to arrange for the sale of the consignment tomorrow. I shall have no difficulty—at least, I anticipate none. Yes, I do the commercial part—as well as the other. I held the Plateau against two thousand natives for three months, with fifty-five men. But I do the commercial part as well.'

As he was looking into the fire still, Sir John stole a long comprehensive glance at his son's face. His old eyes lighted up with pride and something else—possibly love. The clock on the mantelpiece struck eleven. Jack looked at it thoughtfully, then he rose.

'I must not keep you any longer,' he said somewhat stiffly.

Sir John rose also.

'I dare say you are tired; you need rest. In some ways you look stronger, in others you look fagged and pulled down.'

'It is the result of my illness,' said Jack. 'I am really quite strong.'

He paused, standing on the hearthrug, then suddenly he held out his hand.

'Good-night,' he said.

'Good-night.'

Sir John allowed him to go to the door, to touch the handle, before he spoke.

'Then——' he said, and Jack paused. 'Then we are no farther on?'

‘In what way?’

‘In respect to the matter over which we unfortunately disagreed before you went away?’

Jack turned, with his hand on the door.

‘I have not changed my mind in any respect,’ he said gently. ‘Perhaps you are inclined to take my altered circumstances into consideration—to modify your views.’

‘I am getting rather old for modification,’ answered Sir John suavely.

‘And you see no reason for altering your decision?’

‘None.’

‘Then I am afraid we are no farther on,’ he paused. ‘Good-night,’ he added gently, as he opened the door.

‘Good-night.’

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### ENGAGED.

‘Well, there’s the game. I throw the stakes.’

LADY CANTOURNE was sitting alone in her drawing-room, and the expression of her usually bright and smiling face betokened considerable perturbation.

Truth to tell, there were not many things in life that had power to frighten her ladyship very much. Hers had been a prosperous life as prosperity is reckoned. She had married a rich man who had retained his riches while he lived and had left them to her when he died. And that was all the world knew of Lady Cantourne. Like the majority of us, she presented her character and not herself to her neighbours; and these held, as neighbours do, that the cheery, capable little woman of the world whom they met everywhere was Lady Cantourne. Circumstances alter us less than we think. If we are of a gay temperament—gay we shall be through all. If sombre, no happiness can drive that sombreness away. Lady Cantourne was meant for happiness and a joyous motherhood. She had had neither; but she went on being ‘meant’ until the end—that is to say, she was still cheery and capable. She had thrown an open letter on the little table at her side—a letter from Jack Meredith announcing his return to England, and his natural desire to call and pay his respects in the course of the afternoon.

‘So,’ she had said before she laid the letter aside, ‘he is home again—and he means to carry it through?’

Then she had settled down to think, in her own comfortable chair (for if one may not be happy, comfort is at all events within reach of some of us), and the troubled look had supervened.

Each of our lives is like a book with one strong character moving through its pages. The strong character in Lady Cantourne’s book had been Sir John Meredith. Her whole life seemed to have been spent on the outskirts of his—watching it. And what she had seen had not been conducive to her own happiness.

She knew that the note she had just received meant a great deal to Sir John Meredith. It meant that Jack had come home with the full intention of fulfilling his engagement to Millicent Chyne. At first she had rather resented Sir John’s outspoken objection to her niece as his son’s wife. But during the last months she had gradually come round to his way of thinking; not, perhaps, for the first time in her life. She had watched Millicent. She had studied her own niece dispassionately, as much from Sir John Meredith’s point of view as was possible under the circumstances. And she had made several discoveries. The first of these had been precisely that discovery which one would expect from a woman—namely, the state of Millicent’s own feelings.

Lady Cantourne had known for the last twelve months—almost as long as Sir John Meredith had known—that Millicent loved Jack. Upon this knowledge came the humiliation—the degradation—of one flirtation after another; and not even after, but interlaced. Guy Oscar in particular, and others in a minor degree had passed that way. It was a shameless record of that which might have been good in a man prostituted and trampled under foot by the vanity of a woman. Lady Cantourne was of the world worldly; and because of that, because the finest material has a seamy side, and the highest walks in life have the hardiest weeds, she knew what love should be. Here was a love—it may be modern, advanced, *chic*, *fin-de-siècle*, up-to-date, or anything the coming generation may choose to call it—but it was eminently cheap and ephemeral because it could not make a little sacrifice of vanity. For the sake of the man she loved—mark that!—not only the man to whom she was engaged, but whom she loved—Millicent Chyne could not forbear pandering to her own vanity by the sacrifice of her own modesty and purity of thought. There was the sting for Lady Cantourne.

She was tolerant and eminently wise, this old lady who had made one huge mistake long ago; and she knew that the danger, the harm, the low vulgarity lay in the little fact that Millicent Chyne loved Jack Meredith, according to her lights.

While she still sat there the bell rang, and quite suddenly she chased away the troubled look from her eyes, leaving there the keen, kindly gaze to which the world of London society was well accustomed. When Jack Meredith came into the room, she rose to greet him with a smile of welcome.

'Before I shake hands,' she said, 'tell me if you have been to see your father.'

'I went last night—almost straight from the station. The first person I spoke to in London, except a cabman.'

So she shook hands.

'You know,' she said, without looking at him—indeed, carefully avoiding doing so—'life is too short to quarrel with one's father. At least it may prove too short to make it up again—that is the danger.'

She sat down, with a graceful swing of her silken skirt which was habitual with her—the remnant of a past day.

Jack Meredith winced. He had seen a difference in his father, and Lady Cantourne was corroborating it.

'The quarrel was not mine,' he said. 'I admit that I ought to have known him better. I ought to have spoken to him before asking Millicent. It was a mistake.'

Lady Cantourne looked up suddenly.

'What was a mistake?'

'Not asking his—opinion first.'

She turned to the table where his letter lay, and fingered the paper pensively.

'I thought, perhaps, that you had found that the other was a mistake—the engagement.'

'No,' he answered.

Lady Cantourne's face betrayed nothing. There was no sigh, of relief or disappointment. She merely looked at the clock.

'Millicent will be in presently,' she said; 'she is out riding.'

She did not think it necessary to add that her niece was riding with a very youthful officer in the Guards. Lady Cantourne never made mischief from a sense of duty, or any mistaken motive of that sort. Some people argue that there is very little that is

worth keeping secret ; to which one may reply that there is still less worth disclosing.

They talked of other things—of his life in Africa, of his success with the Simiacine, of which discovery the newspapers were not yet weary—until the bell was heard in the basement, and thereafter Millicent's voice in the hall.

Lady Cantourne rose deliberately and went downstairs to tell her niece that he was in the drawing-room, leaving him there, waiting, alone.

Presently the door opened and Millicent hurried in. She threw her gloves and whip—anywhere—on the floor, and ran to him.

'Oh, Jack!' she cried.

It was very prettily done. In its way it was a poem. But while his arms were still round her she looked towards the window, wondering whether he had seen her ride up to the door accompanied by the very youthful officer in the Guards.

'And, Jack—do you know,' she went on, 'all the newspapers have been full of you. You are quite a celebrity. And are you really as rich as they say?'

Jack Meredith was conscious of a very slight check—it was not exactly a jar. His feeling was rather that of a man who thinks that he is swimming in deep water, and finds suddenly that he can touch the bottom.

'I think I can safely say that I am not,' he answered.

And it was from that eminently practical point that they departed into the future—arranging that same, and filling up its blanks with all the wisdom of lovers and the rest of us.

Lady Cantourne left them there for nearly an hour, in which space of time she probably reflected they could build up as rosy a future as was good for them to contemplate. Then she returned to the drawing-room, followed by a full-sized footman bearing tea.

She was too discreet a woman—too deeply versed in the sudden changes of the human mind and heart—to say anything until one of them should give her a distinct lead. They were not shy and awkward children. Perhaps she reflected that the generation to which they belonged is not one heavily handicapped by too subtle a delicacy of feeling.

Jack Meredith gave her the lead before long.

'Millicent,' he said, without a vestige of embarrassment, 'has consented to be openly engaged now.'

Lady Cantourne nodded comprehensively.

'I think she is very wise,' she said.

There was a little pause.

'I *know* she is very wise,' she added, turning and laying her hand on Jack's arm. The two phrases had quite a different meaning. 'She will have a good husband.'

'So you can tell *everybody* now,' chimed in Millicent in her silvery way. She was blushing and looking very pretty with her hair blown about her ears by her last canter with the youthful officer, who was at that moment riding pensively home with a bunch of violets in his coat which had not been there when he started from the stable.

She had found out casually from Jack that Guy Osgard was exiled vaguely to the middle of Africa for an indefinite period. The rest—the youthful officer and the others—did not give her much anxiety. They, she argued to herself, had nothing to bring against her. They may have *thought* things—but who can prevent people from thinking things? Besides, 'I thought' is always a poor position.

There were, it was true, a good many men whom she would rather not tell herself. But this difficulty was obviated by requesting Lady Cantourne to tell everybody. Everybody would tell everybody else, and would, of course, ask if these particular persons in question had been told; if not, they would have to be told at once. Indeed, there would be quite a competition to relieve Millicent of her little difficulty. Besides, she could not marry more than one person. Besides—besides—besides—the last word of Millicent and her kind.

Lady Cantourne was not very communicative during that refined little tea *à trois*, but she listened smilingly to Jack's optimistic views and Millicent's somewhat valueless comments.

'I am certain,' said Millicent, at length boldly attacking the question that was in all their minds, 'that Sir John will be all right now. Of course, it is only natural that he should not like Jack to—to get engaged yet. Especially before, when it would have made a difference to him—in money I mean. But now that Jack is independent—you know, auntie, that Jack is richer than Sir John—is it not nice?'

'Very,' answered Lady Cantourne, in a voice rather suggestive of humouring a child's admiration of a new toy; 'very nice indeed.'



'And all so quickly!' pursued Millicent. 'Only a few months—not two years, you know. Of course, at first, the time went horribly slowly; but afterwards, when one got accustomed to it, life became tolerable. You did not expect me to sit and mope all day, did you, Jack?'

'No, of course not,' replied Jack; and quite suddenly, as in a flash, he saw his former self, and wondered vaguely whether he would get back to that self.

Lady Cantourne was rather thoughtful at that moment. She could not help coming back and back to Sir John.

'Of course,' she said to Jack, 'we must let your father know at once. The news must not reach him from an outside source.'

Jack nodded.

'If it did,' he said, 'I do not think the "outside source" would get much satisfaction out of him.'

'Probably not; but I was not thinking of the "outside source" or the outside effect. I was thinking of his feelings,' replied Lady Cantourne rather sharply. She had lately fallen into the habit of not sparing Millicent very much; and that young lady, bright and sweet and good-natured, had not failed to notice it. Indeed, she had spoken of it to several people—to partners at dances and others. She attributed it to approaching old age.

'I will write and tell him,' said Jack quietly.

Lady Cantourne raised her eyebrows slightly, but made no spoken comment.

'I think,' she said, after a little pause, 'that Millicent ought to write too.'

Millicent shuddered prettily. She was dimly conscious that her handwriting—of an exaggerated size, executed with a special broad-pointed pen purchasable in only one shop in Regent Street—was not quite likely to meet with his approval. A letter written thus—two words to a line—on note-paper that would have been vulgar had it not been so very novel, was sure to incur prejudice before it was fully unfolded by a stuffy, old-fashioned person.

'I will try,' she said; 'but you know, auntie dear, I *cannot* write a long explanatory letter. There never seems to be time does there? Besides, I am afraid Sir John disapproves of me. I don't know why; I'm sure I have tried'—which was perfectly true.

Even funerals and lovers must bow to meal-times, and Jack Meredith was not the man to outstay his welcome. He saw Lady

Cantourne glance at the clock. Clever as she was, she could not do it without being seen by him.

So he took his leave, and Millicent went to the head of the stairs with him.

He refused the pressing invitation of a hansom-cabman, and proceeded to walk leisurely home to his rooms. Perhaps he was wondering why his heart was not brimming over with joy. The human heart has a singular way of seeing farther than its astute friend and coadjutor, the brain. It sometimes refuses to be filled with glee when outward circumstances most distinctly demand that state. And at other times, when outward things are strong, not to say opaque, the heart is joyful, and we know not why.

Jack Meredith knew that he was the luckiest man in London. He was rich, in good health, and he was engaged to be married to Millicent Chyne, the acknowledged belle of his circle. She had in no way changed. She was just as pretty, as fascinating, as gay as ever; and something told him that she loved him—something which had not been there before he went away, something that had come when the overweening vanity of youth went. And it was just this knowledge to which he clung with a nervous mental grip. He did not feel elated as he should; he was aware of that, and he could not account for it. But Millicent loved him, so it must be all right. He had always cared for Millicent. Everything had been done in order that he might marry her—the quarrel with his father, the finding of the Simiacine, the determination to get well which had saved his life—all this so that he might marry Millicent. And now he was going to marry her, and it must be all right. Perhaps, as men get older, the effervescent elation of youth leaves them; but they are none the less happy. That must be it.

*(To be continued.)*

